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POE'S HELEN

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SARAH HELEN WHITMAN

From the portrait in the Hay Library, Brown University. Painted in 1869 *by John N. Arnold*

POE'S HELEN

BY

CAROLINE TICKNOR

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK
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TO

THE MEMORY OF

CHARLOTTE F. DAILEY

WHO MINISTERED WITH LOVING CARE TO

MRS. WHITMAN'S LAST DAYS

AND GUARDED FAITHFULLY THE LITERARY HERITAGE

PLACED IN HER KEEPING

THIS VOLUME

IS INSCRIBED

169567

PREFACE

AFTER the lapse of half a century, Poe still remains the one romantic figure in the field of American letters—a figure in whose dramatic personality the public interest centres so persistently as almost to obscure his literary claims.

And those that were linked with him by ties of love, friendship, or even hate have thereby gained their lasting titles to literary immortality; titles to which Poe's tributes to their merits, set forth in the pages of his "Literati," would never have insured them.

Pre-eminent among the literary women who were closely associated with the poet stands Sarah Helen Whitman, presenting a mystical, poetic figure, quite as romantic as his own, whose claims to literary immortality should rest securely upon her own poetic contributions.

The story of her brief engagement to Poe (the year before his death) has often been recounted, but her own story, so closely identified with that of the important men and women of her time, has, until now, remained untold.

For nearly forty years the literary correspondence, from which the substance of this volume is derived, has been preserved in the Providence

home, where Mrs. Whitman spent her last days. Following her sister's death in 1877 *she accepted the invitation of her friend, Mrs. Albert Dailey, to make her home with her, and there she passed the last months of her life, carrying on her extensive correspondence and preparing for the press a new edition of her poems.*

Believing that a memoir of herself would soon be written, Mrs. Whitman, who had preserved the correspondence of a lifetime, busied herself arranging, classifying, and even annotating the letters which seemed to her to possess vital interest, as did those especially relating to her association with Poe and his biographers. At her request, C. Fiske Harris and Doctor William Channing became her literary executors, and the latter, who was a lifelong friend, wrote the preface to the collected poems published after her death in 1878.

Subsequently, Doctor Channing made over Mrs. Whitman's correspondence to Miss Charlotte F. Dailey, in whose keeping, as literary executrix, and that of her sister, Mrs. Henry R. Chace, it has remained until to-day; Miss Dailey's recent death leaving Mrs. Chace, by whose kind permission the following material is used, in sole charge of the manuscripts and letters.

While there is much of charm and interest in Mrs. Whitman's correspondence that has not been made public, the substance of the material relating to the Poe episode has been already

chronicled. In her endeavor to do justice to Poe's memory, Mrs. Whitman gave freely to his biographers, on both sides of the water, details of her experience and copies of the important letters relative to her romance with the poet. Thus, owing to her zeal in this direction, a goodly portion of her material relative to Poe is widely scattered throughout the pages of a half-dozen biographies. And this species of courtesy was, after Mrs. Whitman's death, extended by Miss Dailey to the late Professor Harrison, to whom she gave the privilege of using certain extracts from her collection in his biography of Poe.

Poe's love-letters (now kindly loaned by Mrs. Chace, for reproduction), which have been, from time to time, quoted in more or less fragmentary form by Poe's biographers, were for the first time printed in full during the Poe centenary celebrations in 1909. *At this time a very limited edition was issued (through the courtesy of Miss Dailey and Mrs. Chace) under the auspices of the University of Virginia.*

Poe's letters to Mrs. Whitman, unique among productions of their kind, must remain in the permanent niche which they have won among the world's classic love-letters. In the present volume they are for the first time fitted into their proper place in the romance of these two poets, who loved to make love in poetic form. Among Mrs. Whitman's own letters, hitherto unpub-

lished, those of Mrs. Clemm, and many others of that day, will be found much that vividly reflects contemporary life and that casts new light upon the ever-interesting subject of the true Edgar Allan Poe.

C. T.

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Poe's Helen

CHAPTER I

SARAH HELEN WHITMAN

"HELEN of a thousand dreams," wrote Edgar Allan Poe to the woman who was most closely allied to him by intellectual and spiritual ties. Others lavished their affection upon this fascinating, morbid genius, but Sarah Helen Whitman loved him and comprehended that genius. With a clear, searching vision she perceived his pitiful weaknesses and temperamental failings, which, though they loomed up darkly, never obscured from her the true, fine attributes of the real man.

She saw where he in weakness failed, where he from prejudice, or passion, erred sadly; she deplored his faults and shortcomings, but her gaze rested steadfastly on a great spirit groping toward the light, a man of brilliant intellect, splendid imagination and marvellous power of expression. Herself a poet, she thoroughly appreciated his poetic gift; a critic,

she could measure his keen insight into literary values; a mistress of English style, she recognized in his creative touch the master-hand.

Having once comprehended the man in his entirety, Mrs. Whitman would never allow the thought of any one phase of his conduct to alter her estimate of him, or to detract from that which she regarded as his just desert.

Poe accorded her the loveliest of his poetic tributes and the most ardent of love-letters, he begged her hand in marriage, withdrew all claim to her small patrimony, and pledged himself to honorable deportment and self-denial. Then he failed miserably, proving himself incapable of living up to the standard imposed and forcing her to sever the tie between them. Following her dismissal, Poe withdrew in anger and humiliation, not hesitating in his chagrin to utter words of cruel bravado and biting criticism.

A woman of less fine caliber would have exhibited some trace of resentment, or would doubtless have joined the chorus of Poe's detractors, but not so Mrs. Whitman, who cherished only sympathy for all his eccentricities; and when Poe's critics poured forth unjust and bitter denunciations, it was she who came forward with simple dignity, and in her little volume, entitled "Edgar Poe and His

Critics," publicly defended the object of their attack.

It was most fitting that the figure of this woman of "a thousand dreams" should first have dawned upon the poet's sight as she stood in the moonlight which rested on her garden, for she was above all else a woman of poetry and moonlight. Yet with all her graces and fantastic moods, she possessed a logical, well-balanced mind, her judgment was keen and free from bias, and her critical faculties excellent.

On the occasion of his first glimpse of Mrs. Whitman, Poe had visited Providence to deliver a poem before the Lyceum. Restless near midnight he had wandered forth from his hotel and had strolled past her home, where she had stepped from the doorway to breathe the night air and the perfume of the garden. This incident, which at the time made a vivid impression on his mind, he afterward immortalized in one of his most exquisite poems, entitled "To Helen."

I saw thee once—once only—years ago:
I must not say *how* many—but *not* many.
It was a July midnight; and from out
A full-orbed moon, that, like thine own soul soaring,
Sought a precipitate pathway up through heaven,
There fell a silvery silken veil of light,
With quietude, and sultriness and slumber,
Upon the upturn'd faces of a thousand
Roses that grew in an enchanted garden,

Where no wind dared to stir, unless on tiptoe,
Fell on the upturn'd faces of these roses
That gave out, in return for the love-light,
Their odorous souls in an ecstatic death—
Fell on the upturn'd faces of these roses
That smiled and died in this parterre, enchanted
By thee, and by the poetry of thy presence.

Clad all in white, upon a violet bank
I saw thee half reclining; while the moon
Fell on the upturn'd faces of the roses,
And on thine own, upturn'd—alas, in sorrow!

Was it not Fate, that, on this July midnight—
Was it not Fate (whose name is also Sorrow),
That bade me pause before that garden-gate,
To breathe the incense of those slumbering roses?

Poe pictures the vanishing of this "enchanted garden," which left him alone in the darkness retaining only the vision of the lady's eyes, which were no doubt exceedingly expressive:

The pearly lustre of the moon went out:
The mossy banks and the meandering paths,
The happy flowers and the repining trees,
Were seen no more: the very roses' odours
Died in the arms of the adoring airs.
All—all expired save thee—save less than thou:
Save only the divine light in thine eyes—
Save but the soul of thine uplifted eyes.
. . . . . .
They are my ministers—yet I their slave.
Their office is to illumine and enkindle—
My duty to be saved by their bright light,

And purified in their electric fire,
And sanctified in their elysian fire.
They fill my soul with Beauty (which is Hope),
. . . . . .

Had Mrs. Whitman failed to respond to this poetic tribute when the manuscript was sent her by its author, the romance might have ended there, but Fate had willed it otherwise.

Poe's vision of her in the garden (or looking out upon it), took place in the summer of 1845, at which time she was forty-two years old. Her meeting with Poe did not take place until three years later, when she was forty-five and he thirty-nine. Their birthdays were identical, both occurring upon January 19.

A pen-portrait of Mrs. Whitman drawn by her friend, Miss Sarah S. Jacobs, may well supplement the interesting portraits painted by Thompson and Arnold, which hang to-day respectively in the Athenæum and Hay Library in Providence.

"As she came flitting into the room and gave you her small, nervous hand, you saw a slight figure, a pale, eager face of fine spiritual expression and irregular features, the dreamy look of deep-set eyes that gazed over and beyond, but never at you. Her movements were very rapid, and she seemed to flutter like a bird, so that her friends asserted that she was in the process of transformation either to or from the condition of a lapwing.

"Her spell was on you from the moment she appeared (and she generally kept you waiting a little), but when she spoke, her empire was assured. She was wise, she was witty, she was interested in the things which we call 'the topics of the day,' making them fresh and fair.

"But it was not her imagination that chiefly bound her friends to this brilliant woman. Her qualities of heart were as engaging as her intellectual gifts were impressive. No one could be long with her without being aware of her quick, generous sympathy, her sweet unworldly nature, her ready recognition of whatever feeble talent, or inferior worth another possessed."

Mrs. Whitman seems to have retained to the end of her life her personal attractiveness, and at the time of her death, at seventy-five years, it was said of her:

"The freshness of her spirit and the charm of her presence were not lost in the vicissitudes of a life of strange and romantic experience. No one ever associated with her the idea of age, and she is represented as lying beautiful as a bride in death, her brown hair scarcely touched with gray."

Mrs. Whitman doubtless possessed something of that magnetic quality which was exerted by certain famous Frenchwomen, who at the age of seventy found suitors almost as

ardent as they had been half a century earlier. Throughout her life Mrs. Whitman had a succession of adorers, and her hand was sought in marriage, even in her latest years, by men who had long given her their devoted allegiance.

Her home in Providence was a literary centre where the intellectual spirits of her time were accustomed to gather, and from the feminine as well as the masculine circle which she drew about her, she evoked extraordinary devotion.

Her correspondence, carried on to her seventy-fifth year, was a voluminous one, and embraced the names of George William Curtis, John Hay, Horace Greeley, and many others. From each she had the faculty of drawing the best, and to each she was able to give that of which the subject seemed most in need.

It is a sad injustice to the memory of one of this country's most gifted women to allow her to go down to posterity as merely a charming personage to whom Poe was engaged for a brief time. She was a woman of rare poetic gifts and vivid personality, and her title to fame should rest securely on her own work, and on the vital influence which she exerted upon all who came in contact with her.

Without a complete knowledge of Poe's association with Mrs. Whitman, it is impossible to comprehend, not only the last phase of his career, but also Poe himself. For in the

realization that this woman understood him as no one else had done, he poured out his heart to her in a series of truly remarkable love-letters, revealing his hopes, his fears, his hates and aspirations. He taught her to know him at his best, and she, in turn, filled with this knowledge, endeavored with unceasing loyalty throughout her life to tell the world the best about him, believing, as did Hawthorne, that a man is "most truly himself" when at his "very best."

CHAPTER II

MRS. WHITMAN'S EARLY LIFE

SARAH HELEN WHITMAN, who claimed descent from an ancient Celtic-Norman stock to which she believed Poe's lineage was also to be traced, was born in Providence, Rhode Island, January 19 (Poe's birthday), 1803. She was the second of three children born to Anna Marsh and Nicholas Power, and first saw the light in the home of her grandfather, Captain Nicholas Power, on the corner of South Main and Transit Streets. Here the family lived until the grandfather's death, in 1808, when they moved "over the bridge," to the corner of Snow and Westminster Streets; later they removed to the "Grinnell House," and subsequently occupied what was called the "Angell Tavern." Here their garden extended to the water, and from this place the children were rowed across the cove to Mr. Noyes's school.

In 1813, Mrs. Whitman's younger sister, Susan Anna, was born, and shortly after this her father, who possessed a roving disposition, departed for North Carolina, whence he sailed for the West Indies. The War of 1812 then being in progress, his vessel was captured by the British, and he was held a prisoner until

1815, when peace was declared, at which time Nicholas Power failed to return to the bosom of his family, but continued his seafaring career.

The early life of the young poet was shadowed by the anxiety occasioned by her father's long absence, which continued for years after his release by the British. He was constantly expected home, but did not put in an appearance until nineteen years had elapsed and he had long been given up by his expectant household. His eventual return proved even more of a shock to his family than had been his original disappearance, and was characterized by his eccentric daughter Anna in the following couplet:

> Mr. Nicholas Power left home in a sailing vessel bound for St. Kitts,
> When he returned, he frightened his family out of their wits.

In 1816 the Power family removed to the house which will always remain especially identified with them, situated at the corner of Benefit and Church Streets, where they lived for over forty years, and where Poe's brief romance took place. The fact that this house was painted red, distressed Sarah Helen, who was, however, somewhat consoled by the handsome woodwork of the interior, and by the lovely garden in the rear, immortalized by Poe.

From her girlhood days this garden was a constant source of joy to Sarah Helen Power,

NICHOLAS POWER

From a miniature by Malbone in the Providence Athenæum

who had a passion for flowers, later expressed in some of her most admirable verse; she did not like attending school, much preferring to read novels, and to share in the social activities of her elder sister Rebecca.

For a short time she visited her aunt, Mrs. Bogert, on Long Island, New York, and this relative sent her to a school kept by John A. Griscom, a Quaker; during this period she met many cultivated people and came in touch with a much wider social circle than she had previously enjoyed. On her return to Providence she attended Miss Sterry's school for a brief time. Already she was amusing herself by writing humorous rhymes about the admirers of her sister Rebecca, some of whom began to turn their attention toward the younger sister; among these was a young lawyer named John Winslow Whitman, who upon a certain occasion, when the young people were having a frolic, shook the young poetess by the shoulders, exclaiming: "You hussy, you wrote those verses!" This tribute to her poetic gifts pleased the young woman exceedingly, and from this time she began to regard the young lawyer with especial interest.

In 1821 Rebecca Power married William E. Staples, and in 1824 the engagement of Sarah Helen to John Winslow Whitman was announced. He was the third son of Judge Kilborne Whitman, of Pembroke, Massachu-

setts, and had graduated from Brown University in 1818; he began his practise of law at Barnstable, but later took up his profession in Boston. His marriage to Sarah Helen Power took place on July 10, 1828, at the house of the bride's uncle, Cornelius J. Bogert, at Jamaica, Long Island, at whose home the bride had, in earlier years, spent many happy days.

The honeymoon was passed partly at the home of the Bogerts on Long Island, and partly with Mrs. Whitman's aunt, Mrs. William Blodget, in Providence, in whose large and valuable library the niece had improved her opportunities to become better acquainted with the classics and with French and German literature. Mrs. Blodget gave the bridal couple a wedding reception in Providence before they left to take up their residence in Boston.

Mrs. Whitman's taste for poetry was frowned upon by certain relatives, and her cousin, Susan Warner, author of "The Wide, Wide World," was, in later years, anxious for her regeneration. These relatives sent her reproving letters, penned in precise copperplate, in which they expressed the hope that she "did not read much poetry, as it was almost as pernicious as novel-reading." And they were also greatly distressed at her religious state of mind, which they feared was far from orthodox.

Their admonitions, however, had small effect upon Mrs. Whitman, who doubtless viewed her

Cousin Susan's "Wide, Wide World" as a sadly restricted universe.

In 1829 Mrs. Whitman's first published poem appeared; it was entitled "Retrospection," and was signed "Helen," the name which she always preferred. At this time Mrs. Sarah J. Hale, editor of the *Ladies' Magazine*, in which this poem was printed, became interested in her work, and asked her for contributions.

For the next two or three years the married life of the young couple was rather an anxious one, as they were very restricted in their means and as Mr. Whitman was not possessed of practical business qualities. He nevertheless gained some recognition in his profession, and was also much interested in an invention, to reduce the price of steel by a cheaper method of production, which he hoped would prove an immediate road to fortune. During a visit to Providence he contracted a cold from which he never wholly recovered, and in 1833 his death took place while on a visit to his father's home at Pembroke.

Thus closed the first part of Mrs. Whitman's career, and the young widow returned to make her home with her mother and sister in Providence. Here she continued her literary work, making occasional visits to her late husband's relatives in Boston.

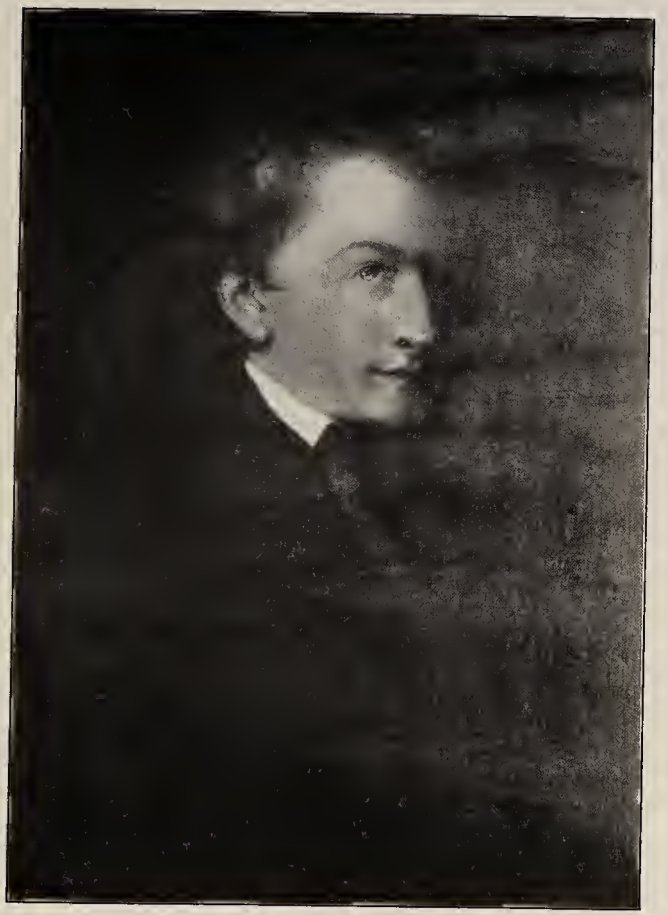
In 1838 the portrait of Mrs. Whitman,

which now hangs in the Athenæum in Providence, was painted by Giovanni Thompson. It shows her in her widow's cap with pink strings, and gives an excellent idea of her personal attractiveness at thirty-five years of age. An exquisite miniature of her father Nicholas Power, painted by Malbone, is also in possession of the Athenæum, and one may trace considerable likeness between the daughter and the debonair and adventurous seafaring man.

Among Mrs. Whitman's literary productions at this time may be mentioned a prize poem which she read at the opening of Shakespeare's Hall, in Providence, on November 27, 1838.

It was between 1830 and 1850 that the Transcendentalists flourished in New England, and the subjects of theology, revelation, and inspiration were the chief themes discussed. By entering into the transcendental spirit a man was made "a citizen of the world of souls." Transcendentalism was a form of pure idealism, the insistence upon the power of thought and will, and upon the exaltation of the life of the spirit above all material or physical demands. The persistent search for the things of the spirit at this time brought about an awakened interest in spiritualism.

Mrs. Whitman and her immediate circle were intensely absorbed in this experimental field, eagerly discussed the results attained by vari-



JOHN WINSLOW WHITMAN

ous mediums, and corresponded with each other in regard to their individual beliefs. James Freeman Clarke, Horace Greeley, and many others of prominence in the intellectual world, busied themselves with spiritualistic research.

Mrs. Whitman, whose mysterious and elusive qualities made her seem rather of the spirit than the material world, was by temperament particularly fitted for this transcendental epoch. Yet she could be blithe and merry as well as a lady of dreams, and on occasion she could command a fund of sarcasm. In the matter of clothes she was entirely unconventional, dressing in a style all her own; she loved silken draperies, lace scarfs, and floating veils, and was always shod in dainty slippers. She invariably carried a fan to shield her eyes from any glare, and her pleasant rooms were never pervaded by anything but a subdued light.

In 1851 she furnished the New York *Tribune* with articles on spiritualism, which were extensively copied, and among those who corresponded with her on this subject were Epes Sargent, S. W. Eveleth, S. B. Brittan, Horatio Greenough, Horace H. Day, and Horace Greeley. The latter, in writing her upon this topic, suggested that he "would be pleased if Mrs. Whitman could find him a medium to take care of his children, and to accompany the family to Westchester," declaring: "I am

willing to believe, but the evidence seems to evade."

Horace H. Day, who had sought Mrs. Whitman's acquaintance in connection with this mutual interest, remained to the end of his life one of her warmest friends, and her visits to England and France were the result of generous invitations from him. In return she wrote two poems for his household, entitled "Christmas Eve" and "Santa Claus."

Mrs. Anna Cora Mowatt, the actress, was among Mrs. Whitman's friends who entered into the discussion of spiritualism, and urged her to contribute articles to *Sargent's Magazine*, a periodical with which Mrs. Mowatt's husband was associated. This lady began her public career by giving readings, and later wrote a play, entitled "Fashion," the success of which inspired her to go upon the stage. After only one rehearsal Mrs. Mowatt appeared in "The Lady of Lyons," and at the end of the performance received such an ovation as to assure her that she had chosen the right profession. Her correspondence with Mrs. Whitman extended over a number of years, and her residence in Richmond brought her in touch with many of Poe's friends.

The New England of 1840–50 was the New England of changing ideals. The antislavery leaders were at their height of enthusiasm, reformers of every school were breaking through

old bonds; prophecies regarding the end of the world were rife, Brook Farm was setting its unique standard and registering its famous experiments, and on all sides supporters of the kingdom of the mind and spirit were putting forth suggestions for the extension of those dominions. In Boston, Parker and Channing were names to conjure with, and Emerson was lecturing to delighted audiences.

Margaret Fuller was conducting her famous "Conversations," and freely discussing the various topics which were enthralling the attention of her contemporaries. She, too, was questioning the problem of spiritualism, and exclaiming: "I am perplexed about the spirits —that seem to come a great way to teach so little!" In 1838 she was teaching school in Providence, where for a time she touched the little circle that clustered about Mrs. Whitman. Although friendly in their relations these two women were temperamentally opposed to one another, and seldom found their points of view or their ideas in harmony. Miss Fuller was a woman of compelling power, while Mrs. Whitman was a woman of unusual charm.

Among the latter's enthusiastic admirers was the Honorable Wilkins Updike,* whose correspondence extended over many years. He always insisted that she would marry him even-

* Author of "History of the Narragansett Church."

tually, and looked forward to the time when his persistence would conquer all objections on the lady's part.

Mrs. Whitman's health, which was always frail, was a constant source of anxiety to her family. During her entire life she suffered from heart-trouble, and felt herself upon the verge of a departure from those whom she loved, and throughout her correspondence one finds frequent references to her belief that she is about to take leave of her friends.

Her principal anxiety was in connection with her eccentric sister Anna, who was during her entire life guarded and protected by mother and sister. After the death of Mrs. Power, in 1860, the elder daughter assumed the whole responsibility of the younger, who was ten years her junior, and to whose tyrannical domination she unselfishly adapted her life. In the home at 39 Benevolent Street, to which they moved after the mother's death, Anna was the sole arbitress, and if she was not in the mood for the admission of visitors, none were allowed to enter. Anna seldom appeared when there was company, but enjoyed sitting near by, concealed in a closet or adjoining room, where she could hear the conversation that was taking place. Fearing that should her sister survive her she would not have sufficient means of support, Mrs. Whitman during her last years scrimped herself

pitifully in order to save all that was possible for Anna's future. In the end, Anna passed away one year before the sister who had rendered her such untiring devotion.

CHAPTER III

FRIENDSHIP WITH CURTIS AND HAY

THE rôle of literary mentor was one in which Mrs. Whitman excelled; she could inspire the young writer to do his best, touch gently upon his faults, and point out with admirable discernment the pathway to his higher capabilities. Among her letters from literary friends may be found many feeling tributes from those to whom she furnished both aid and inspiration.

George William Curtis, whose subsequent achievements in the world of letters are too well-known to demand further comment, early enjoyed her sympathetic companionship and thoughtful criticism; he confided to her, in a series of long letters, his literary hopes and aspirations, and throughout their lifelong friendship accorded the same deference to her literary judgment that he exhibited when he submitted to her the question: "Is 'Trumps' worth publishing?"

His correspondence with Mrs. Whitman opened when he was in the early twenties, just after his return from Brook Farm, and continued with great regularity up to the time of his departure for Europe in 1846. It

was later renewed at frequent intervals, and ended only with Mrs. Whitman's death, when, in 1878, Curtis wrote a feeling appreciation of her, in *Harper's Magazine*, in the September "Easy Chair."

The early communications of Curtis, in which he poured out his heart about poetry and nature, are admirable examples of the "literary letter" in all its old-time elegance and elaboration. A few extracts from these reveal not only the thoughtful, poetic nature of the young man, but also reflect clearly Mrs. Whitman's own mental attitude, and the quality of intellectual stimulus which she was able to bestow.

The first letter from Curtis is dated Concord, April 9, 1845, and in it the writer begs Mrs. Whitman for more explicit criticism of his own literary work and offers his own theory concerning poetry and the poets.

My Dear Mrs. Whitman:

May I say a few words about poetry and Poets to you, hoping so to provoke from you a closer criticism upon my verses than you have yet given me. Is not the Orpheus & E. complete without the Introduction and close? I do not remember that I asked you this, and if so, would it not increase the unity of impression if I should separate it from them. It has occurred to me that it might be so. Is

the poetical power shown in the conception and general effect of what you heard, as well as in the melody and illustration?

Is not "The Poet" more perfect than the Orpheus as a work of art? Does not the preponderance of thought make it less poetical, or is the thought subdued sufficiently under that veil?

And do you feel after this lapse of time when the novelty of the impression has worn off, that from what you heard there could be gathered a book which should be no unworthy offering upon that altar, where the greatest of men are Priests?

It was a great delight to me to find in you the insight into the poetical part of poetry, which I find in so very few persons. That you could realize, as I had so long done without sympathy, that the charm of a Poem, was not the thought nor the melody, but a subtle poetical perception, which gives the character to the thought, and which from the nature of things is melodious, and so in its natural expression constitutes poetry,—shall I say that the poetical sense is so rare among men, so much rarer than the intellectual, that the most approved of the poems of the great Masters are not the most poetical? that "As you like it" is less thoughtful but more purely poetical than "Hamlet," and that Tennyson is more truly a poet than Wordsworth?

And to the perfect Poet belongs this fineness of perception and of equal necessity, faculty of expression. The prose Poets of whom we hear are men who have the first but not the second, and therefore they are the true audience of the Poet and his only Critics, as men who have a delicate appreciation of form and color, are unworking Painters and so constitute the only valuable spectators of pictures. They cannot be called Painters, nor can the first-class be called Poets.

Byron had the faculty but not the perception. He did not see things poetically. With Shelley, I think more and more, Poetry was an elegant and passionate pursuit. He was too much a Scholar. This is seen in the forms his poems took. The principal ones are moulded in the antique Grecian style. With Keats, Poetry was an intense life. It was a vital, golden fire, that burned him up. Wordsworth is a man of thought, who gives it a rhythmical form.

Milton would have been more purely a Poet, if he had been a Catholic, rather than an ultra Protestant. There is a severity in his poetry, which makes him the favorite of Intellectual men,—but is a little too hard—not oriental enough to satisfy poetical men.

In Shakespeare was the wonderful blending—the delicate harmony—but his sonnets would have been credential enough to his fit audience.

Because in this sphere, man the intellect, rules, therefore that declares upon all things. Those books are eternal, those Poets Olympian whom it crowns. But it is a singular fantasy of Nature, that the Intellect is always too intellectual to rightly estimate the value of Poetry, which is the higher language of this sphere. Music, so imperfect here, foreshadows a state more refined and delicate. It is a womanly accomplishment, because it is sentiment, and the Instinct declares its nature, when it celebrates heaven as the state where glorified souls chant around the Throne. Poetry is the adaption of music to an Intellectual sphere. But it must therefore be revealed through souls too fine to be measured justly by the Intellect.

I hope that you will guess my thought from these fragmentary hints and will answer it and my questions as speedily as you will— Direct simply to me, Concord, Massachusetts.

Yours truly

G. W. CURTIS.

Throughout his correspondence Curtis dwells much upon his intense admiration for Keats and Shelley, in regard to whose work he carries on long discussions with Mrs. Whitman, urging her to write an essay upon Keats, to match one which she had written on Shelley. This production had brought upon her the displeasure of one of the most influential families

in Providence, who regarded Shelley as an atheist, and any defender of his work as one who had fallen from grace.

In his subsequent letters Curtis describes his association with the literary circle in Concord which embraced Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau, and others. He writes on June 22, 1845, touching upon an article on Emerson which Mrs. Whitman had just published:

"I have delayed writing until I should have returned from a trip to Wachusett mountain, and until I had read your article. The first I have done, the second not yet. Knowing that Mr. Emerson had it, I spoke to him of it, regretting that I had not seen it first to correct some errors of which I had been advised. He was very curious to know the Author, for he said though it was headed 'By a Disciple' it was evidently written from a purely independent point, and he seemed to do such excellent Justice to it, although he said it had the usual vice of kindness, which he says of all reviews of himself, that when he told me he thought he ought to know who wrote it, I ventured to tell him. I hope I have not done wrong. Henry Thoreau also said it was not by a Disciple in any ordinary sense. It is his copy which is here, and he wishes me to make it as perfect as I can. This week I shall see it, and will then write you.

"I went to Wachusett with Mr. Hawthorne and Mr. Bradford. It has long lured me from its post in the Western horizon. And as I climbed the green sides, I felt as an artist must feel, who first treads the ground of Italy. The verses which follow may express to you something of the feeling I had, although they are very unworthy."

Curtis here introduces one of the many poems which he was in the habit of sending to Mrs. Whitman for criticism. This one, inspired by the beauty of Mount Wachusett, opens with the lines:

> Thou, bathing in the Summer air
> That graceful line of virgin green,
> How often I beheld thee there,
> And knelt to thee a native queen.

In his next letter he expresses his appreciation of her article on Emerson:

"I read with great delight your article. It is the best I have seen upon Mr. Emerson. I might say that it finds more of a System of Philosophy than I think he is conscious of, although, after all you only indicate the central thought which animates his writings, and say such good things of Philosophy that it loses that very rigid outline which marks it in the Schools. I am glad that you treat him as a

Prophet rather than Poet. My feeling about the latter is very strong, and yet few contemporaries write verses which I love so much. I wish you might have seen Mr. Emerson and Mr. Hawthorne for the last year, casually and at all times, as I have done, that I might know if you would not at last say, the wise Emerson, the poetic Hawthorne. I am going to show some of my verses to the latter. I do not care to do so to the former. And I do it with some trembling as I did to you, for I feel that he knows what is Poetry, and what is poetical,—what is the power of the Poet—and what the force of talented imitation.

"The volume of verses by W. W. Lord, only warns me the more to wait until I am riper for deciding, before I venture to publish. I trust what you say implicitly and yet I waver, why is this? . . .

"Do you observe how in speaking of men of genius, we incline to measure them by the standard of entire genius, forgetting that every such man has but a ray, and makes beautiful only what that ray shines upon? I have been very much amused by several persons saying that Ellery Channing could not be a true Poet, because he went to Europe and left his wife as he did. They thought of the great perfect man, whom we choose to call Poet, and who is supposed to fill all the supposed duties of life as well as he sings.

While Ellery is a selfish, indolent person (though a good deal more and better) who certainly does write good Poetry. It is a terrible situation for them. They have hitherto perhaps thought him a Poet, but the true Poet? would he have done so—Aut Cesar aut nihil. Good night."

He writes in October of nature and the thoughts which the autumn awakens in his mind, and closes with a reference to his having now shown his early poems to Hawthorne:

"I hope your long silence portends no illness, at which you hinted in your last letter to me, which I received just as I was on the wing for the White hills, and answered only by a few songs, or has the Autumn which lies round the horizon like a beautifully hued serpent crushing the flower of Summer, fascinated you to silence with its soft, calm eyes? This seems the prime of the season, for the trees are yet full of leaves and thickness and the mass of various color is solid,—before this month is over the woods will grow sere and wan, and so the splendid result of the year becomes its mausoleum. . . .

"Through the Summer Mr. Hawthorne had the Orpheus the smaller long poem, and some of the smaller verses. It was most grateful to me to hear him say what he did, for I have

great faith in his perception. 'The Poet' I did not show him. The Orpheus he thinks may be corrected and improved by correction, which I felt when you suggested something of the same sort before. I will do that during the Autumn or Winter.

"Concord loses very much to me in his final departure, which takes place to-morrow Friday. He is a fountain of deep, still water, where the stars may be seen at noon.

"Mr. Emerson is writing lectures upon Plato, Goethe, Swedenborg, Montaigne, and Shakespeare.

"I have been most of the day with Ellery Channing, whom I like very much. If I was to remain here through the winter I should know him much better than I ever have for I have seen him very little since I have lived here.

"I am not afraid of silence in my friends, so you shall write only when you care and can."

Continuing his correspondence from New York Curtis discusses the phases of city life which contrast so vividly with those which lie close to nature; his views sometimes differ from those of Mrs. Whitman in regard to their mutual friends, and also on literary subjects; especially do they disagree in their attitude toward certain productions of Margaret Fuller,

while Curtis does not share in Mrs. Whitman's admiration for Poe's work. He writes from New York in January, 1846, six months before his departure for Europe:

"You will have seen from my last letter that I did not sympathise with Miss Fuller's view of Cromwell, but I thought her review of Longfellow one of the best things that I ever saw of hers. How is it that we differ so much, for you say while those on Cromwell were among her best, those upon Longfellow were among the worst. She seemed to me to give him with great tenderness and consideration and due appreciation his just place. She did not abruptly say, 'you are no Poet,' but having expressed her views of Poetry and the Poet measured him by it. He failed by that as he has long ago by mine and by that of his best friends, and most calculated to appreciate him. . . . His verses are pleasing to me, but I see a thousand old Teutons looking through his eyes and giving them the light they have. Very many seem translations from the German, the imagery and the circumstances are not his own, but are pleasant to him from association and study. Miss Fuller's criticism of imagery I think unjust. It is overflowing another and drowning him in her Individuality, but in the main I should say with her, that Mr. Longfellow is an elegant scholar, a

man of good taste and delicate mind, who is fluent and sweet, but writes from a vein of sentiment which is not sound, and is too little inspired to write anything important."

It may be of interest at this point to insert a paragraph written upon this topic by Mrs. Whitman to Ida Russell, another of her literary protégées (to whom Whittier at one time paid his addresses).

"I last night read to Eleanor,* Mrs. W. S. Burgess, Miss Fuller's notice of Carlyle's Cromwell. We thought it very spirited and unaffected both in thought and style. Her remarks on Longfellow, however just in the main, were in manner and spirit most ungracious. She writes well on many subjects but she is too short-sighted to 'scourge the magpies from Parnassus.' I have known her more than once to mistake a nightingale for a magpie— Witness her judgment and condemnation of poor Keats—a sentence which in compliance with the highest authorities she would now doubtless, gladly reverse."

In this letter to Miss Russell Mrs. Whitman discusses Poe's criticism of Miss Barrett, and quotes his view of Shelley, showing her interest at this time in his critical work. That

* Mrs. Burgess was aunt to George W. Curtis.

she has also discussed the same subject with Curtis is evident from his next statement:

"You speak of Poe's article upon Miss Barrett. I should much like to see anything really good of his. With the exception of his volume of Poems I know nothing of him save a tale in one of the Reviews a month ago, which was only like an offensive odor. There seems to be a vein of something in him, but if of gold he is laboring through many baser veins, and may at last reach it. In one of the foreign reviews I found a recent article upon Miss B. It was on the whole, just, although I am struck with the utter want of sympathy between Critics and their prey. This Review disposed of the lady as a jockey disposes of horses. And yet I love to have those whom I love pass through this coldest ordeal and show that they have something for it."

In February the European plan begins to take form, and Curtis questions whether his friend Burrill will consent to accompany him at a date earlier than had been previously suggested:

"What should surprise me the other day like a bird flying into the midst of the Winter silence, but a proposition from Ellery Channing for us to accompany himself and George

Bradford to Italy in May, and there pass a year! I thought at once that I could not go, as a Lover looks coldly upon the Mistress whom he adores, but I found that the direct proposal had kindled the long dormant spark into a flame, and that sooner or later it would elevate me to that soft celestial atmosphere, which spiritually and physically belongs to Italy. Burrill leans upon his hand and thinks intently about it. He wants to postpone, to study the language more thoroughly, to read the history of the country, until every stone and tower shall tell readily what it is and has been. But I seldom think about things— A proposition comes to my mind and is ripened into action without any influence wilfully upon my part, like a nest egg hatched by the sun and not by the parental warmth. So this idea of Italy lies cooking, and what the issue will be is not at all certain. I think it very doubtful if we go in the Spring. If we do not, we shall lose our party which is so pleasant to my fancy, but we shall gain a better knowledge of the language than we have now. If I went I should regard it as a preparation for going again hereafter, and yet I feel as if I should be very unwilling to come home again when once there.

"Since Ellery's letter came I have been reading Saddle books and Italian travel. Shelley's letters from Italy please me very much. They are so full of delicate appreciation of the

country and all its influences. He was so finely wrought that it seems the air must have passed into his frame and mingled many a golden secret with his being, which no tongue can utter and no coarser nature feel. There was a spiritual voluptuousness in his nature which Italy alone could satisfy, and which constituted in him, so much of his Poetical feeling and fancy. The same thing was in Keats, but in him more fiery and intense."

When June arrives the final plans for departure have been arranged and Curtis, who is making a last visit to Concord, writes almost regretfully of the step which he is about to take, but which he feels will be an important mile-stone in his future life:

"The landscape is so gentle and beautiful here, and I am so pleasantly situated with some old Brook Farm friends, hearty, homely and quiet people, that I am sorry my Summer is not to be passed here. Already I feel how sorry I shall be when I must really say Good-bye and separate from all I know, for even Burrill will not go with me, but has the best reasons for remaining in America. It will be a crisis in my life in various ways, and I have a singular curiosity about the influence of Europe upon myself. In the afternoons here, I have a good time reading Roman history, Niebuhr

and Arnold are both such generous, wise, and sincere men and Scholars, that I am borne swiftly along as on the charmed waters of a romance. Yet I am very glad I have had no thought of preparing to go, for I see very clearly, I should never have gone in that case. Association and art, and an indefinable individuality of external Nature constitute my charm for Italy, and with a general reading one has all the material ready. As the time comes, it seems to me as if I looked more closely almost more tenderly upon our country here, the landscape I mean. Nature is such a splendid mute bride, whose lips we constantly watch expecting to see them overflow with music, with melodious explanations of all that her beauty has hinted and nourished.

"You ask me to send you some poems but I have been idle. I have not caught many beautiful fancies that have flickered before me and which perhaps shone over treasure. But I look forward to a leisure abroad when these can all be resolved into form. In July I shall be in Providence and then I will read you what little I have written."

On a peaceful Sunday afternoon, he writes of the beautiful June weather and the tranquil New England atmosphere, which he is about to relinquish; he picks up a volume of Whittier's poems which he says he generally has

by him on Sundays, and, after closing it, pens a final message from Concord:

"There is a Saxon purity (about Whittier) and the sadness of a strong man, without the least affectation, a strong man to whom life was filled with rich shadow, rather than a wide flowing sweet sunlight, which makes it in many respects the best volume of American Poetry. Did you know that Ida Russell is very intimate with Whittier, so that I have sometimes heard that they were engaged. She pointed him out to me once, in an Anti-Slavery Convention. He is a thin man with a sad almost sharp face, and dark hair. He moved silently and lonelily among the crowd and seemed like a strain of his Poetry impersonized. Mr. Hawthorne told me that he came to see him once, and he was much pleased with his quiet manner. I have written to ask Mr. H. to go to Monadnock mountain with me this week, but I am afraid his duties, for he is a Custom house officer, will not permit.

"Here I am at the end of my paper, and yet I could say a great deal more. I wish we were sitting together on some shady bank of the Seekonk, and gliding down the sunny hours, with conversation as simple and natural as its course, not so anxious for thought as gentle union with the feeling and the silence of the day. The Sabbath feeling, I shall not have in

Italy, that will be one of the great changes or the great losses. I shall go from Concord by the first of July and be in Providence a week or two afterwards. If you can, write, if not, farewell until I see you."

In a note written just before his departure for Europe, he thanks Mrs. Whitman for all that she has been to him, and assures her that her strong words of encouragement have been the first to shed light upon his literary path. He concludes:

"Good-bye, for that is all that I have to say, I owe you more than I can say. . . . I shall write you from Italy, which sounds like a promise to address you from Paradise and the other world. Sometimes write me, Aunt E. will tell you how to address them. Farewell and may all good angels bless you."

John Hay, who during his years at Brown University ranked among the brightest of the college men, entered with enthusiasm into the intellectual circle which Mrs. Whitman drew about her, and was deeply gratified by the interest which she took in his early poems. These he submitted in deep humility, regarding her with a kind of sacred awe, and in his letters addressing her as "Mrs. Whitman," in order to avoid seeming presumptuous. His ac-

quaintance with her did not begin until toward the close of his college days and he later protested: "If I had had the honor of knowing you earlier, I would have had less to regret in my collegiate course." Hay dreamed at this time, that the career of the poet might be his, and turned reluctantly away from its allurements to the prosaic life of a Western town. After his departure from Providence, for the uncongenial atmosphere of Warsaw, Illinois, he sent back letters filled with regret for the life which he had relinquished and with expressions of gratitude for the inspiration which he had derived from his friends in Rhode Island.

He writes on August 30, 1856:

WARSAW, ILLINOIS.

MRS. WHITMAN:

You must have wondered at the time that has elapsed between my promise and its fulfillment, if, indeed you ever gave the subject a thought, and have doubtless placed me in the category of those afflicted with the moral malady whose influence is so universal on College Hill, and dismissed me at once with the consideration that insincerity is the normal condition of the student's mind and that my disorder has been heightened by a sudden removal to a region whose moral atmosphere was never remarkable for purity. . . .

I very much fear that if I remain in the West, I will entirely lose all the aspirations I formerly cherished and see them fading with effortless apathy. Under the influence of the *Bœotian* atmosphere around me my spirit will be subdued to what it works in and my residence in the East will remain in memory an oasis in the desolate stretch of a material life. So before the evil days come on I cling more and more eagerly to the ties which connect me with Providence and civilization, and only hope those whose genius I have long admired and whose characters I lately learned to love, may not entirely cast me off but sometimes reach me a hand in the darkness, to raise and console. All the benefit would of course be confined to one party unless my friends belong to the class whom Theodore Parker mentioned, as 'having more joy in delighting than delight in enjoying.' If it would not be taxing your kindness too far I would be glad to send you other verses which I may hereafter write and beg the favor of your criticism upon them.

Very sincerely,

JOHN HAY.

The poems sent for her perusal were entitled: "Last Night," "In the Mist," and another containing the refrain, "Is it well, Is it well, The living are mazed and the dead cannot tell."

In a subsequent letter he says:

"It may seem a little to you to give a few words of generous praise to a moody boy or to send to an exile in the West, stray glimpses of the world he has left forever. But it is much to me that I once had the honor of writing lines which you thought it worth while to flatter.

"On returning from a hunting excursion into the wilds of Missouri I found the papers you had sent awaiting me, and for several weeks I read repeatedly those beautiful descriptions trying to lay the foundations of mountains in my own soul and retouching with the colors of your fancy the picture of Niagara which was fading from memory. I have been very near to the valley of the shadow—I felt the deprivation keenly in the Fall when the woods were blazing with the Autumnal transfiguration and the nights slept tranced in the love of the harvest moon. I am now as well as usual. It is unpleasant to give up my dreams, but is it not necessary? I would be very grateful to anyone who would prove it is not. Yet in spite of all the encroaching influences of barbarism I still think of Providence with unabated affection and sigh for New England as a Peri for Paradise."

Nora Perry, whose poem beginning:

> Tying her bonnet under her chin,
> She tied the young man's heart within,

first captured her public, was another member of this Providence coterie, and a close friend of Mrs. Whitman's, to whom she doubtless owed much in the field of letters. To Miss Perry, John Hay also wrote of his aspirations in the realm of poetry, enclosing verses for her inspection and exclaiming: "How glad I am that the world is learning to love Mrs. Whitman as much as those who have sat at the feet of the revered Priestess."

This early enthusiasm was never wholly obliterated, and Hay's biographer says of him: "Long afterward, when he appeared to strangers an accomplished man of the world, or when he staggered under the burdens of statesmanship, he heard again, and thrilled to hear, the poetic voices which captivated his youth. So, at certain seasons, dwellers on the Breton coast hear the pealing of the bells of the city which the waves submerged long, long ago."

CHAPTER IV

THE ROMANCE OF "THE RAVEN"

IT has been said that the most memorable date in the history of Poe was that of January 29, 1845. Prior to that time his reputation had been purely local, but henceforth it was destined to become world-wide.

The success of "The Raven" first made him popular as a poet, and promptly resulted in a new collection of his verses. Poe's theory here set forth, that the death of a beautiful woman was the saddest and most poetical of all themes was repeatedly exemplified by him. "Annabel Lee," "Lenore," "The Sleeper," "Ulalume," and "To One in Paradise," all testify to his fondness for this theme.

"The Raven" was the instrument of fate which brought about Poe's romance with Mrs. Whitman, on whose imagination this poem made a deep impression, producing eventually a response from her pen.

This response did not come until the winter of 1848, when Mrs. Whitman complied with the request of her friend Miss Lynch (afterward Mrs. Botta) to send a contribution to her "Valentine" party. A similar request had been already complied with during the previous year when Mrs. Whitman had forwarded some

sprightly verses which were read at one of the literary gatherings presided over by this clever hostess, whose drawing-room was probably the nearest approach to the French salon ever achieved on this side of the water.

On this occasion Miss Lynch had written in regard to her prospective party:

"I still have my Saturday Evenings and they are often very pleasant, both the evenings and the company. There is sufficient infusion of new comers to keep them fresh, and enough of the regular corps to preserve very much of the same character. They cannot be called literary meetings so much as Social, though there are frequently a good many literary friends there. Last year on the evening of Valentine's Day, which came on Saturday, I had a Valentine party; that is there were valentines written for all present, mostly original, and in general merely complimentary verses. The best of them were selected and read, and some of them were afterwards published. I am going to have another this year, and now to come to the point—I wish to know if you will not help me."

Miss Lynch enumerates some of the guests whom she expects to be present, among whom may be mentioned: N. P. Willis, Horace Greeley, Miss Sedgwick, Morris (who wrote "Woodman, Spare that Tree"), Grace Greenwood, Bayard Taylor, Hart, the sculptor, Cassius

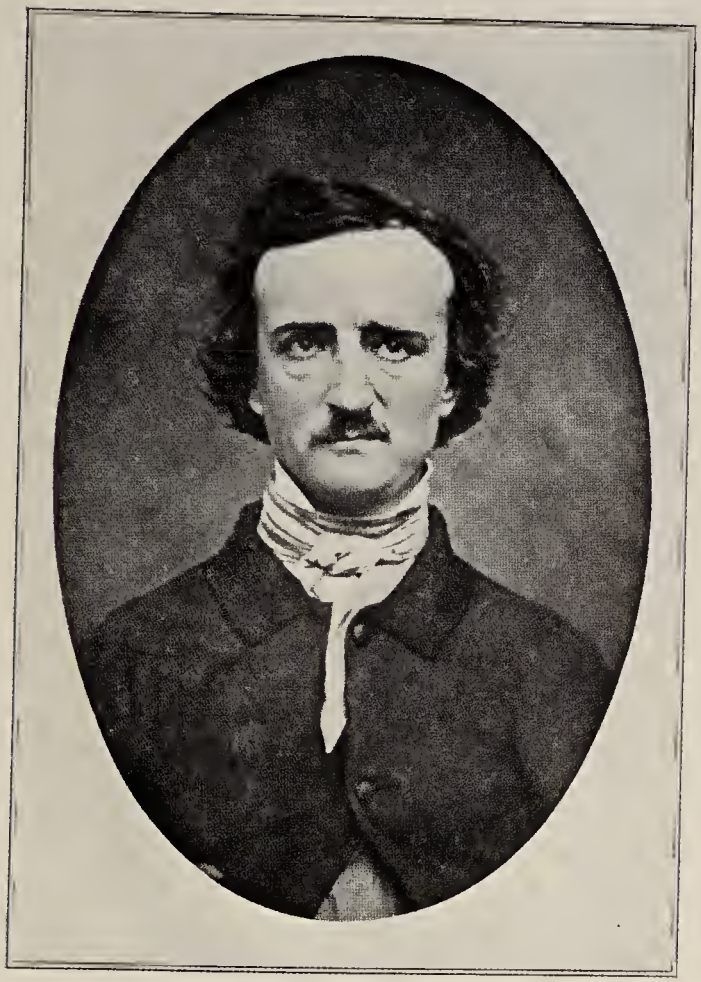
M. Clay, W. H. Furness, Margaret Fuller, and Charles A. Dana.

In this letter the name of Poe is not referred to, although he frequently attended these literary evenings; his wife, who was in failing health, seldom accompanied him.

Mrs. Whitman's compliance with her friend's request called forth a second appeal the following year, and on this occasion a poem addressed to Edgar A. Poe was composed and forwarded to Miss Lynch.

Although at this time Poe had never met Mrs. Whitman, he was already keenly interested in her poetical work and in reports of her fascinating personality; moreover, he still cherished his romantic vision of her as she had appeared to him by moonlight.

On her part, Mrs. Whitman had for some time been exceedingly interested in the work of Poe, which had from the first appealed strongly to her imagination, and to her fondness for the mysterious and psychological. Her own poetical work strongly reflects his influence, and suggests that native similarity in their points of view, which Mrs. Whitman ascribed to their descent from a common ancestor. Moreover, prior to the Valentine party, Miss Lynch and others had made it plain to Mrs. Whitman that the eccentric genius, whose work she admired, was eagerly seeking her acquaintance. And an article by Poe on Eliza-



EDGAR ALLAN POE

From a daguerreotype

beth Barrett, whose work he had been one of the first to extol, had been sent to Mrs. Whitman at his request. It was therefore not strange that she should have sat down to pen her response to "The Raven" with more than usual enthusiasm, thinking it not unlikely that Poe would be among her friend's guests on February 14.

At the head of the famous valentine which was addressed "To Edgar Allan Poe," Mrs. Whitman quoted the lines from Young's "Revenge."

A Raven true as ever flapped his heavy wing against the window of the sick, and croaked, "Despair."

The verses follow:

Oh! thou grim and ancient Raven,
From the Night's Plutonic shore,
Oft in dreams, thy ghastly pinions
Wave and flutter round my door—
Oft thy shadow dims the moonlight
Sleeping on my chamber floor.

Romeo talks of "White doves trooping,
Amid crows athwart the night";
But to see thy dark wing swooping
Down the silvery path of light,
Amid swans and dovelets stooping,
Were, to me, a nobler sight.

Oft amid the twilight glooming
Round some grim ancestral tower
In the lurid distance looming,
I can see thy pinions lower,—

Hear thy sullen storm-cry booming
Thro' the lonely midnight hour.

Oft this work-day world forgetting,
From its turmoil curtained snug,
By the sparkling embers sitting
On the richly broidered rug,
Something round about me flitting
Glimmers like a "Golden Bug."

Dreamily its path I follow,
In a "bee line" to the moon
Till, into some dreamy hollow
Of the midnight sinking soon,
Lo! he glides away before me
And I lose the golden boon.

Oft like Proserpine I wander
On the Night's Plutonic Shore
Hoping, fearing, while I ponder
On thy loved and lost Lenore,
Till thy voice like distant thunder
Sounds across the distant moor.

From thy wing, one purple feather
Wafted o'er my chamber floor
Like a shadow o'er the heather,
Charms my vagrant fancy more
Than all the flowers I used to gather
On "Idalia's velvet shore."

Then, Oh! Grim and Ghastly Raven!
Wilt thou to my heart and ear
Be a Raven true as ever
Flapped his wings and croaked "Despair"?
Not a bird that roams the forest
Shall our lofty eyrie share.

Providence, R. I., Feb. 14, 1848.

In writing to thank Mrs. Whitman for the valentine Miss Lynch declares: "The verses are very happy and I am greatly indebted to you. . . . Poe I have seen nothing of for more than a year past."

Later, she forwards an enthusiastic description of the party, which went off with great éclat, the poem to Poe having received particular appreciation. Miss Lynch hesitates in regard to giving the poem out for publication on account of Poe's unpopularity at that time. She writes: "I really do not think it would be any advantage to you to publish the valentine to Poe. Not because it is not beautiful in itself, but there is deeply rooted prejudice against him which I trust he will overcome. . . . I earnestly request you not to mention this because I have no quarrel with Poe, and admire his genius as much as any one can."

Mrs. Whitman says of the valentine party: "The poem 'To the Raven' was one of a large number written by my sister and myself at the request of Miss Lynch, for a party given by her that year to the artists and literary people of New York. Among the best of the Valentines furnished by us was one to 'A City Pigeon,' Willis, and another 'To the Raven.' Mr. Poe having lost favor with many of the Literati was not, it seems, among the invited guests on that evening as we had supposed he would have been; but the anonymous

MS. verses were sent him by Miss Lynch through Mrs. Osgood.

"He recognized the handwriting having two or three years before been shown by Miss Lynch some MS. verses I had sent her for the editor of the *Democratic Review*."

Mrs. Whitman's valentine was eventually published in the *Home Journal*, and on March 28, 1848, Mrs. Frances Sargent Osgood wrote to its author:

"I see by the *Home Journal* that your beautiful invocation has reached 'The Raven' in his eyrie and I suppose, ere this, he has *swooped* upon your little *dove-cot* in Providence. May Providence protect you if he has! for his croak is the most eloquent imaginable. He is in truth 'A glorious devil, with large heart and brain.' Do write to me and tell me what you are doing in the literary way and how your health is now. As for me I have a terrible racking cough which is killing me by inches, and there are not many inches left now."

That the poem was read and highly appreciated by Poe is evinced by a communication written by him to his friend Miss Anna Blackwell in June of the same year, in which he says:

My Dear Miss Blackwell:

I fear you have been thinking everything ill of me, and especially that I lack common courtesy—since your letter of three weeks ago remains unanswered. . . .

After discussing the publication of her book of poems, he adds:

If there is any service I can render you, critically or otherwise, after issue of your book or before, command me without scruple.

I would be gratified if you would reply to this note. How happens it that you have flown away to Providence? or is this a Providential escape? Do you know Mrs. Whitman? I feel deep interest in her poetry and character. I have never seen her but once. Anne Lynch, however, told me many things about the romance of her character which singularly interested me and excited my curiosity. Her poetry is, beyond question, *poetry*—instinct with genius. Can you not tell me something about her—anything—everything you know—and keep my secret—that is to say, let no one know that I have asked you to do so? May I trust you? I can—and will.

Believe me truly your friend

Edgar A. Poe.

Not long after the receipt of this letter Miss Blackwell visited Mrs. Whitman, and while at her house encountered Miss Maria McIntosh,

whose literary work was well known at that time. It was a bright moonlight night, and during the conversation which ensued, the latter lady began to discourse about Poe to Mrs. Whitman, remarking: "On such a night as this, one month ago, I met Mr. Poe for the first time at the house of a gentleman in Fordham and his whole talk was of you."

Upon hearing this statement Miss Blackwell, with the true feminine relish for the romantic, could not refrain from admitting that she had in her possession a letter from the gentleman in question in which the same admiration was expressed. Having once launched the dangerous subject it was useless to attempt to comply with Poe's plea for secrecy, and the next step was the presentation to Mrs. Whitman of the letter itself.

That Miss Blackwell was not friendly toward Poe is later asserted by Mrs. Whitman, who writes:

"Miss Blackwell was a fine French scholar and translated some of George Sand's early novels. She passed the summer of 1848 in Providence and told me many things of Poe before I knew him. She was of an austere, hard nature and did not seem to feel any special interest in Poe. She went to the country (near the home of Poe) for her health and seemed charmed with the neatness and order of the (Poe) household. She was not very

gracious to me after she found that Poe was 'infatuated' about me. And said many things to prejudice me against him. Nothing worse however than that he was utterly improvident and incapable of taking care of himself. But a most agreeable and high-bred gentleman nevertheless."

The succeeding link in the chain, according to Mrs. Whitman's statement, was forged by herself in August of this year. Up to this time she had in no way acknowledged any of the various clippings or communications which had been sent her by Poe, and the result was that he, sensitive in regard to her unresponsiveness, had relinquished his efforts to get into communication with her; he had gone, early in the summer, to Richmond, where he was intent upon bending all his energies toward the establishment of a literary journal, which he hoped would prove superior to all others published in this country.

Many conflicting statements have been put forth regarding Poe's stay in Richmond at this time, but Mrs. Whitman firmly believed that he then renewed his acquaintance with Mrs. Shelton, a widow, with whom he had been in love many years before, while living with his guardian, Mr. Allan.

The death of his young wife in surroundings of much misery, and his own forlorn condition, had left Poe in a position where he was partic-

ularly susceptible to sympathy and kindness, and was probably not averse to the thought of a comfortable home and freedom from financial worry. Whether or not he had actually paid his addresses to Mrs. Shelton at this time, it is not unlikely that he was on the point of doing so when he received the long-awaited missive from Mrs. Whitman. Her response came in the form of a couple of verses which took up a refrain from his poem, "To Helen," and emphasized the words, "Beauty which is Hope."

A low bewildering melody
Is murmuring in my ear—
Tones such as in the twilight wood
The aspen thrills to hear
When Faunus slumbers on the hill
And all entrancèd boughs are still.

The jasmine twines her snowy stars
Into a fairer wreath—
The lily through my lattice bars
Exhales a sweeter breath—
And, gazing on night's starry cope,
I dwell with "Beauty which is Hope."

On receipt of this communication Poe immediately left Richmond for New York where he obtained a letter of introduction to Mrs. Whitman from his friend Miss Maria McIntosh, and was soon on his way to Providence.

Shortly before taking this trip, however, Poe took the precaution to send a communica-

tion under an assumed name in order to ascertain whether Mrs. Whitman was then in Providence.

This note was presumably the request of an autograph-hunter for that lady's autograph, and read as follows:

New York—Sep. 8, '48

DEAR MADAM—

Being engaged in making a collection of autographs of the most distinguished American authors, I am, of course, anxious to procure your own, and if you would so far honor me as to reply, however briefly to this note, I would take it as a very great favor,

Res'y.

Yr. mo. od. st.

EDWARD S. T. GREY.

Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman.

The writing in this letter is unlike Poe's other penmanship, and was undoubtedly altered to suit his purpose.

That the note called forth a satisfactory response was proved by Poe's prompt appearance in Providence armed with the letter of introduction from Miss McIntosh, which read:

DEAR MRS. WHITMAN,

This letter will be handed to you by Mr. Edgar A. Poe. He is already so well known to

you that anything more than the announcement of his name would be an impertinence from me. I feel much obliged to Mr. Poe for permitting me thus to associate myself with an incident so agreeable to both of you, as I feel persuaded your first meeting will prove.

Your friend Dr. Channing is well, though much disappointed at not receiving the promised letter from you.

With sentiments of esteem believe me, dear Mrs. Whitman,

Yrs. very truly
M. J. McIntosh.

New York
Sept. 15th, 48.

Following the presentation of this letter of introduction came the romantic courtship, the spirit of which is doubtless best expressed in those love-letters in which Poe poured out his feelings.

The introduction to Mrs. Whitman has been characterized by Professor Harrison as opening the way for "a new canto in the elegy of his (Poe's) restless existence, accentuated in every stanza by pitiful and desperate episodes due to broken resolutions."

The number of Poe's visits to Providence may not be accurately chronicled, but Mrs. Whitman has made a note of at least five sojourns of which the order and events are not

HOME OF MRS. WHITMAN, PROVIDENCE

exactly known, and which culminated in the broken engagement, a conclusion which seemed to Mrs. Whitman's friends the only one possible.

CHAPTER V

POE'S LOVE-LETTERS

OF these remarkable productions, Professor Harrison has said:

"One must turn to the most glowing letters of Abelard and Eloise, or to the 'Sonnets from the Portuguese' for the fire, the urgency, and the consuming thirst to be loved that burn and glow in Poe's letters of this period, a period of new-risen hope, a resurrection from a dead self, of rebirth into an existence that began to shimmer with the new leaves and new light of a dawning spring after the autumnal blasts and blight of the months just gone by.

"The eager, tremulous, stormy joy of these new weeks and months is prophetic of the new Poe that was about to be born, or that might have been born, had not Disaster intervened here, as at every important crisis moment of the poet's life, and cried 'Halt!' "

The date of Poe's first love-letter to Mrs. Whitman, October 1, 1848, testifies to the rapidity of his courtship, for hardly a fortnight had intervened between it and the letter of introduction penned by Miss McIntosh, in New York. His siege laid to the heart had

been swift, impetuous and overwhelming, and though he had as yet elicited no satisfying response from Mrs. Whitman, it is evident that he had made a vivid impression upon her, and that she was deeply stirred by his magnetic personality.

In reference to the opening of the correspondence Mrs. Whitman said subsequently:

"He endeavored to persuade me that I could lift his life out of the torpor of despair which was enshrouding it, and give an inspiration to his genius of which it had as yet exhibited no token. But notwithstanding the eloquence with which he urged his wishes and his hopes, I knew too well that I could not hope to exercise over him the power which he ascribed, I was moreover wholly dependent on my mother and her life was bound up in mine. In parting from him I told him that I would write him and tell him much that I could not then say to him. It was in reply to this letter of mine that I received the first of his letters."

FORDHAM,
Sunday night, Oct. 1, 1848.

I have pressed your letter again and again to my lips, sweetest Helen—bathing it in tears of joy, or of a "divine despair." But I—who so lately, in your own presence, vaunted the "power of words"—of what avail are mere words to me now? Could I believe in the ef-

ficiency of prayers to the God of Heaven, I would kneel—humbly kneel—at this the most earnest epoch of my life—kneel in entreaty for words—but for words that should disclose to you—that might enable me to lay bare to you my whole heart. All thoughts—all passions seem now merged in the one consuming desire—the mere wish to make you comprehend—to make you see that for which there is no human voice—the unutterable fervor of my love for you—for so well do I know your poet-nature, oh Helen, Helen! that I feel sure if you could but look down into the depths of my soul with your pure spiritual eyes you could not refuse to speak to me that, alas! you still resolutely leave unspoken—you would *love* me if only for the greatness of my love. Is it not something in this cold, dreary world, *to be loved?*— Oh, if I could but burn into your spirit the deep and true meaning which I attach to those three syllables underlined!—but, alas! the effort is all in vain and "I live and die unheard."

When I spoke to you of what I felt, saying that I loved now for the *first* time, I did not hope you would believe or even understand me: but if, throughout some long dark summer night, I could have held you close, close to my heart and whispered to you the strange secrets of its passionate history, then indeed you would have seen that I have been far from

attempting to deceive you in this respect. I could have shown you that it was not, and could never have been in the power of any other than yourself to have moved me as I am now moved—to oppress me with this ineffable emotion—to surround and bathe me in this electric light, illumining and enkindling my whole nature—filling my soul with glory, with wonder, and with awe. During our walk in the cemetery I said to you while the bitter, bitter tears sprang to my eyes—"Helen I love now—now for the first time and only time." I said this, I repeat, in no hope, that you could believe me, but because I could not help feeling how unequal were the heart riches we might offer each to each:—I, for the first time giving my all, at once, and forever, even while the words of your poem were yet ringing in my ears:

Oh then, beloved, I think on thee
And on that life so strangely fair,
Ere yet one cloud of Memory
Hath gathered in Hope's golden hair.

I think on thee and that lone grave
On the green hillside far away—
I see the wilding flowers that wave
Around thee as the night winds sway;

And still, though only clouds remain
On life's horizon, cold and drear,
The dream of youth returns again
With the sweet promise of the year.

Ah Helen, these lines are indeed beautiful, beautiful—but their very beauty was cruelty to me. There seemed, too, so very especial a purpose in what you did.

I have already told you that some few casual words spoken of you *[three words marked over and illegible] by Miss Lynch, were the first in which I heard you mentioned. She described you, in some measure, personally. She alluded to what she called your "eccentricities" and hinted at your sorrows. Her description of the former strangely arrested,—her allusion to the latter enchained and riveted, my attention. She had referred to thoughts, sentiments, traits, moods which I knew to be my own, but which, until that moment, I had believed to be my own solely —unshared by any human being. A profound sympathy took immediate possession of my soul. I cannot better explain to you what I felt than by saying that your unknown heart seemed to pass into my bosom—there to dwell forever—while mine, I thought, was translated into your own. From that hour I loved you. Yes, I *now* feel it was then—on that evening of sweet dreams—that the very first dawn of human love burst upon the icy night of my spirit. Since that period I have never seen or heard your name without a shiver, half of delight, half of anxiety. The impression,

*Explanatory notes by Charlotte F. Dailey.

left, however, upon my mind by Miss Lynch (whether through my own fault or her design I knew not) was that you were a wife *now* and a most happy one,—and it is only within the last few months that I have been undeceived in this respect. For this reason I shunned your presence and even the city in which you lived—You may remember that once, when I passed through Providence with Mrs. Osgood [1845, in Mrs. Whitman's handwriting], I positively refused to accompany her to your house, and even provoked her into a quarrel by the obstinacy and seeming unreasonableness of my refusal. I *dared* neither go nor say why I could not. I *dared* not speak of you—much less see you.

In regard to this visit to Providence Mrs. Whitman subsequently writes:

"The night to which he alludes, when he passed through Providence with Mrs. Osgood, was I believe the night when he first saw me and recognized me through her description.

"I was not 'wandering in a garden of roses' as Dr. Griswold has seen fit to describe me, but standing on the side-walk or in the open doorway of the house on that sultry 'July evening' when the poet saw me and 'dreamed a dream' about me which afterwards crystalized into immortal verse."

Poe's letter continues:

"For years your name never passed my

lips, while my soul drank in, with a delirious thirst, all that was uttered in my presence respecting you. The merest whisper that concerned you awoke in me a shuddering sixth sense, vaguely compounded of fear, ecstatic happiness, and a wild, inexplicable sentiment that resembled nothing so nearly as conscious guilt.—Judge, then, with what wondering, unbelieving joy I received your well-known MS., the Valentine which first gave me to see that you knew me to exist. The idea of what men call Fate lost then for the first time, in my eyes, its character of futility. I felt that nothing hereafter was to be doubted, and lost myself for many weeks, in one continuous, delicious dream, where all was a vivid yet indistinct bliss. Immediately after reading the Valentine, I wished to contrive some mode of acknowledging—without wounding you by seeming directly to acknowledge my sense—oh my keen—my profound—my exulting—my ecstatic sense of the honor you had conferred upon me. To accomplish, as I wished it, precisely what I wished, seemed impossible, however; and I was on the point of abandoning the idea, when my eyes fell upon a volume of my own poems; and then the lines I had written in my passionate boyhood* to the first purely ideal love of my soul—to Helen Stanard

* Mrs. Whitman drew a line in the margin against this passage.

of whom I told you—flashed upon my recollection. I turned to them. They expressed all—all that I would have said to you so fully,—so accurately—and so conclusively, that a thrill of intense superstition ran at once through my frame. Read the verses and then take into consideration the peculiar need I had, at the moment, for just so seemingly unattainable a mode of communicating with you as they afforded. Think of the absolute appositeness with which they fulfilled that need—expressing not only all that I would have said of your person, but all that of which I most wished to assure you, in the lines commencing 'On desperate seas long wont to roam.' Think, too, of the rare agreement of name—Helen and not the far more usual Ellen—think of all those coincidences, and you will no longer wonder that, to one accustomed as I am to the Calculus of Probabilities, they wore an air of positive miracle. There was but one difficulty—I did not wish to copy the lines of my own MS. nor did I wish you to trace them to my volume of poems, I hoped to leave at least something of doubt on your mind as to how, why, and especially whence they came. And now, when on accidentally turning the leaf, I found even this difficulty obviated, by the poem happening to be the last in the book, thus having no letter-press on its reverse—I yielded at once to an overwhelming sense of

Fatality. From that hour I have never been able to shake from my soul the belief that my destiny, for good or for evil, either here or hereafter, is in some measure interwoven with your own." *

The poem "To Helen" probably written while Poe was awaiting his commission as a cadet, is one of his earliest, as well as most charming lyrics:

Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicean barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, way-worn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece,
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche
How statue-like I see thee stand!
The agate lamp within thy hand,
Ah! Psyche, from the regions which
Are holy Land!

Poe's letter to Mrs. Whitman continues: "Of course, I did not expect on your part any acknowledgement of the printed lines 'To Helen,' and yet, without confessing it even to myself, I

* Mrs. Whitman drew a line in the margin against this passage.

experienced an undefinable sorrow in your silence. At length, when I thought you had time fully to forget me (if indeed you ever really remembered) I sent you the anonymous lines in MS. I wrote them, first, through a pining, burning desire to communicate with you in some way—even if you remained in ignorance of your correspondent. The mere thought that your dear fingers would press—your sweet eyes dwell upon characters which I had penned —characters which had welled out upon the paper from the depths of so devout a love—filled my soul with rapture which seemed then all sufficient for my human nature. It then appeared to me that merely this one thought involved so much of bliss that here on earth I could have no right ever to repine—no room for discontent.—If ever, then, I dared to picture for myself a richer happiness, it was always connected with your image in Heaven. But there was yet another idea which impelled me to send you those lines:—I said to myself—The sentiment—the holy passion which glows within my spirit for her, is of Heaven, heavenly, and has no taint of earth. Thus there must lie, in the recesses of her own pure bosom, at least the germ of a reciprocal love; and if this be indeed so, she will need no earthly clew—she will instinctively feel who is her correspondent. In this case, then, I may hope for some faint token, at least, giving me to under-

stand that the source of the poem is known and its sentiments comprehended even if disapproved. Oh God—how long—*how long* I waited *in vain*—hoping against Hope—until at length I became possessed with a spirit far sterner—far more reckless than Despair.—I explained to you, but without detailing the vital influence they wrought upon my fortune—through singular additional yet seemingly trivial fatalities by which you *happened* to address your lines to Fordham in place of New York—by which my aunt *happened* to get notice of their being in the West Farms Post-Office—and by which it *Happened* that, of all my set of the *Home Journal*, I failed in receiving only that individual number which contained your published verses; but I have not yet told you that your MS. lines reached me in Richmond on the very day in which I was about to depart on a tour and an enterprise which would have changed my very nature—fearfully altered my very soul—steeped me in a stern, cold, and debasing, although brilliantly gigantic ambition—and borne me 'far, far away,' and forever from *you*, sweet, sweet Helen, and from this divine dream of your love."

Around the above paragraph has been waged a controversy, as has been previously suggested, which even to-day remains unsettled.

The first debatable point is whether Poe

was in Richmond at this exact time, as Mrs. Whitman, who placed implicit faith in his statements to her, always maintained, in the face of certain biographers, and of Mrs. Clemm, who insisted that "her Eddie" was "not in Richmond at this period." Subsequent investigation has, however, proved that Poe was then in Richmond in accordance with his assurance to Mrs. Whitman.

The second debatable point is Poe's statement that, when he received Mrs. Whitman's manuscript lines, he was about to "embark upon an enterprise" that would have "borne him forever" from her. This enterprise was believed by Mrs. Whitman (as has been stated) to have been a renewal of his association with Mrs. Shelton, his early sweetheart.

Many investigators assert, however, that Poe did not see Mrs. Shelton at this time, and that she herself so declared, after his death. The conclusion therefore drawn by some biographers is that the "enterprise" was not matrimonial, but was either some business project or else the duel in which he had been on the point of engaging.

Mr. J. R. Thompson's account of this affair was forwarded to Mrs. Whitman by a correspondent who had interviewed this gentleman, but in the light of careful scrutiny it seems to be only partially correct.

This writer asserts:

"One day in 1848, Poe came into Mr. Thompson's office in a state of great excitement, sat down and wrote a challenge, of which he requested Thompson to be the bearer. In answer to his friend's remonstrances Poe handed him a paragraph cut from the *Examiner*, then edited by Mr. Daniel, in which was published an account of Poe's reported marriage with Mrs. Whitman making some invidious comments upon the lady's temerity. Poe said he did not mind what was said of him but *her* name should not be dragged in. Daniel should not speak of her, and fight him he would!

"Thompson refused point blank to carry the challenge to the delinquent editor, at which Poe declared that he would go and cane him on the instant.

"Thompson informed him that as Daniel went armed the chances were that he would be shot before he could chastise his opponent. But in spite of this warning Poe proceeded to interview Daniel, who succeeded in molifying his wrath and so no violence ensued; the paragraph was amicably explained and Poe announced to Thompson that he was going to Providence to be married to Mrs. Whitman."

In reviewing this account in the light of further research it becomes evident that Poe was not likely to have talked of a "marriage"

with Mrs. Whitman before the receipt of her first encouraging communication; and those that have referred to the files of the *Examiner* say that while a printed reference to the Poe-Whitman marriage did appear there, it was not until some time *after* the date of the challenge.

The most plausible explanation of the affair seems to be that Poe, whose enthusiasms were apt to be discussed freely, especially when he was a little exhilarated, may have discoursed to various friends upon his admiration for Mrs. Whitman; it is likely that his remarks reached Daniel, who, having been associated with the Whitman family, no doubt publicly aired his opinion regarding Poe's interest in that direction; it is known that Poe had already had some business disagreement with Daniel, and it is probable that the combination of circumstances enraged Poe to the point of his sudden outburst.

Moreover, it is quite evident that it was not the receipt of any verses from Mrs. Whitman which prevented the duel, but the mollifying response of Daniel, so that it seems very absurd to suggest that this could have been the "enterprise" referred to.

The most likely explanation seems to be that, without having seen Mrs. Shelton at this time, Poe had had his attention drawn to the advantages of renewing the old association and

was seriously thinking of doing so, just at the time when Mrs. Whitman's communication reached him.

Yet Mrs. Whitman's version of the matter as written to Stoddard after the publication of an article by him in *Harper's Magazine*, may be worth repeating. And after its perusal the reader can decide who told the truth, Mrs. Whitman, Mrs. Shelton, or Poe? She writes:

"Mr. Poe received these lines" (the ones sent by her) "in Richmond where he had gone, as he afterward told me, in the hope of obtaining subscribers for a magazine to be called the 'Stylus,' intending if successful to make a tour of the southern states before returning north.

"During this visit to Richmond Mr. Poe had called on Mrs. Shelton, formerly Miss Royster, a lady whom he had admired in his youth while he was still under the guardianship of Mr. Allan, who had exerted his authority to break off the intimacy.

"He *told* me that having been received by Mrs. Shelton with great kindness he was urged by one of their 'mutual friends' to renew his addresses to her. He confessed that he might have followed this advice had he not received the anonymous stanzas which brought him at once back to New York."

Did Mrs. Whitman forget what had been told her by Poe? Did Mrs. Shelton forget

when she renewed her acquaintance with Poe, or did Poe tell the story wrongly?

Poe's love-letter next sets forth his first impressions of Mrs. Whitman:

"And now, in the most simple words at my command, let me paint to you the impression made upon me by your personal presence. As you entered the room, pale, timid, hesitating, and evidently oppressed at heart; as your eyes rested appealingly, for one brief moment, upon mine, I felt, for the first time in my life, and tremblingly acknowledged, the existence of spiritual influences altogether out of the reach of my reason. I saw that you were Helen—*my* Helen—the Helen of a thousand dreams—she whose visionary lips had so often lingered upon my own in the divine trance of passion—she whom the great Giver of all Good preordained to be mine—mine only—if not now, alas! then at least hereafter and *forever* in the Heavens. You spoke falteringly and seemed scarcely conscious of what you said. I heard no words—only the soft voice, more familiar to me than my own, and more melodious than the songs of the angels. Your hand rested in mine, and my whole soul shook with a tremulous ecstasy. And then but for very shame but for fear of grieving or oppressing you—I would have fallen at your feet in as pure—in as real a worship as was ever offered to Idol or to God. And when, after-

wards, on those two successive evenings of all—Heavenly delights, you passed to and fro about the room—now sitting by my side, now far away, now standing with your hand resting on the back of my chair, while the preternatural thrill of your touch vibrated even through the senseless wood into my heart—while you moved thus restlessly about the room—as if a deep Sorrow or more profound Joy haunted your bosom—my brain reeled beneath the intoxicating spell of your presence [and it was with no human senses that I either saw or heard you. It was my soul only that distinguished you there]. I grew faint with the luxury of your voice and blind with the voluptuous lustre of your eyes.

"Let me quote to you a passage from your letter:

"'You will, perhaps, attempt to convince me that my person is agreeable to you—that my countenance interests you;—but in this respect I am so variable that I should inevitably disappoint you if you hoped to find in me to-morrow the same aspect which one knew to-day. And again, although my reverence for your intellect and my admiration of your genius make me feel like a child in your presence, you are not perhaps aware that I am many years older than yourself. I fear you do not know it, and that if you had known it you would not have felt for me as you do.'

"To all this what shall I say—except that the heavenly candor with which you speak oppresses my heart with so rich a burden of love that my eyes overflow with sweet tears. You are mistaken, Helen, very far mistaken about this matter of age. I am older than you; and if illness and sorrow have made you seem older than you are—is not all this the best of reasons for my loving you the more? Cannot my patient cares—my watchful earnest devotion—cannot the magic which lies in such devotion as I feel for you, win back for you much—oh, very much of the freshness of your youth? But grant that what you urge were even true. Do you not feel in that inmost heart of hearts that the 'soul-love' of which the world speaks so often and so idly is, in this instance at least, but the veriest the most absolute of realities? Do you not—I ask of your reason, darling, not less than of your heart—do you not perceive that it is my diviner nature—my spiritual being—which burns and pants to commingle with your own? Has the soul age, Helen? Can immortality regard Time? Can that which began never and shall never end, consider a few wretched years of incarnate life? Ah, I could weep—I could almost be angry with you for the wrong you offer to the purity—to the sacred reality of my affection. And how am I to answer what you say of your personal appearance?

Have I not seen you, Helen? Have I not heard the more than melody of your voice? Has not my heart ceased to throb beneath the magic of your smile? Have I not held your hand in mine and looked steadily into your soul through the crystal Heaven of your eyes? Have I done all these things?—or do I dream?—or am I mad? Were you indeed all that your fancy, enfeebled and perverted by illness, tempts you to suppose that you are, still, life of my life! I could but love you—but worship you the more; it would be so glorious a happiness to prove to you what I feel! But as it is, what can I—what am I to say? who ever spoke of you without emotion—without praise who ever saw you and did not love? But now a deadly terror oppresses me; for I clearly see that these objections—so groundless—so futile when urged to one whose nature must be so well known to you as mine is—can scarcely be meant earnestly; and I tremble lest they but serve to mask others, more real, and which you hesitate—perhaps in pity—to confide to me. Alas! I too distinctly perceive also, that in no instance have you permitted yourself to say that you *love me*. You are aware, sweet Helen, that on my part there are insuperable reasons forbidding me to urge upon you my love. Were I not poor—had not my late errors and reckless excesses justly lowered me in the esteem of the good—were I wealthy,

or could I offer you worldly honors—ah then—then—how proud would I be to persevere—to —to plead—to pray—to beseech you for your love—in the deepest humility—at your feet—at your feet, Helen, with floods of passionate tears.

"And now let me copy here one other passage from your letter—'I find that I cannot now tell you all that I promised. I can only say to you'": [Here follow four lines of her letter obliterated, and two lines of his letter obliterated.—C. F. D.*] "may God forever shield you from the agony which these *your* words occasion *me!* You will never, *never* know—you can *never* picture to yourself the hopeless, rayless despair with which I now trace these words. Alas Helen! my soul!—what is it that I have been saying to you!—to what madness have I been urging you? I who am *nothing* to you—*you* who have a dear mother and sister to be blessed by your life and love. But ah, darling! if I am selfish, yet believe me that I truly, truly love you, and that is the most spiritual of love that I speak, even if I speak it from the depths of the most passionate of hearts. Think—oh, think for me, Helen, and for" [The remainder of this page is cut off, and begins again upon the back.—C. F. D.*] "comfort you—soothe you—tranquilize you. My love—my faith should instil into your bosom

* Note by Charlotte F. Dailey.

a preternatural calm. You would rest from care—from all worldly agitation. You would get better and finally well. And if *not*, Helen, if not—if you died—then at least I would clasp your dear hand in death, and willingly—oh, joyfully—joyfully—joyfully—go down with you into the night of the grave.

"Write me soon—soon—ah soon—but not much. Be not weary or agitate yourself for my sake. Say to me those coveted words which would turn Earth into Heaven." [The rest of the page is missing.—C. F. D.*]

In reference to this impassioned communication Mrs. Whitman asserted:

"My answer to his letter, in which I gave him more explicitly the reasons for my refusal, drew from him the second letter in which he promises never again to ask me to be his wife."

* Note by Charlotte F. Dailey.

CHAPTER VI

POE'S LOVE-LETTERS

(CONTINUED)

POE'S second love-letter to Mrs. Whitman was dated October 18, 1848. He wrote:

In pressing my last letter between your dear hands, there passed into your spirit a sense of the love that glowed within those pages: you say this, and I feel that indeed it *must* have been so:—but, in receiving the paper upon which your eyes now rest, did no shadow steal over you from the Sorrow within me? Oh, God! how I curse the impotence of the pen—the inexorable distance between us! I am pining to speak to *you*—Helen—to you in person—to be near you while I speak—gently to press your hand in mine to look into your soul through your eyes and thus to *be sure* that my voice passes into your heart. Only thus could I hope to make you understand what I feel; and even thus I *should* not hope to make you do so; for it is only Love which can comprehend Love—and alas! you do not love me. Bear with me! have patience with me! for indeed my heart is broken; and let me struggle as I

will, I cannot write you the calm, cold language of a world which I loathe—of a world in which I have no interest—of a world which is not mine. I repeat to you that my heart is broken —that I have no farther object in life—that I have absolutely no wish but *to die*. These are hackneyed phrases; but they will not now impress you as such—for you must and do know the passionate agony with which I write them. "You do not love me"—in this brief sentence lies all I can conceive of despair. I have no resource—no hope; Pride itself fails me now. You do not love me; or you could not have imposed upon me the torture of eight days silence—of eight days terrible suspense. You do not love me—or, responding to my prayers you would have said to me— "Edgar I do." Ah, Helen, the emotion which now consumes me teaches me too well the nature of the impulses of love! Of what avail to me in my deadly grief, are your enthusiastic words of mere admiration? Alas! Alas!—I have been loved, and a relentless Memory contrasts what you say with the unheeded unvalued words of others. But ah—again, and most especially—you do not love me, or you would have felt too thorough a sympathy with the sensitiveness of my nature, to have so wounded me as you have done with this terrible passage of your letter: "How often I have heard men and women say of you—'He has

great intellectual power, but no principle—no moral sense.'" Is it possible that such expressions as these could have been repeated to me—to me—by one whom I loved—ah, whom I love—by one at whose feet I knelt—I still kneel—in deeper worship than ever man offered to God?—And you proceed to ask me why such opinions exist. You will feel remorse for the question, Helen, when I say to you that, until the moment when those horrible words first met my eye, I would not have believed it *possible* that any such opinions could have existed at all:—but that they do exist breaks my heart and is separating us forever. I love you too truly ever to have offered you my hand—ever to have sought your love—had I *known* my name to be so stained as your expressions imply. Oh God! what shall I say to you Helen, dear Helen!—let me call you now by that sweet name, if I may never so call you again.—It is altogether in vain that I tax my Memory or my Conscience. There is no oath that seems to me so sacred as that sworn by the all-divine love I bear you.—By this love, then and by the God who reigns in Heaven, I swear to you that my soul is incapable of dishonor—that, with the exception of occasional follies and excesses which I bitterly lament, but to which I have been driven by intolerable sorrow, and which are hourly committed by others without at-

tracting any notice whatever—I can call to mind no act of my life which would bring a blush to my cheek—or to yours. If I have erred at all in this regard, it has been on the side of what the world would call a Quixotic sense of the honorable—of the chivalrous. The indulgence of this sense has been the true voluptuousness of my life. It was for this species of luxury that, in my early youth, I deliberately threw away from me a large fortune, rather than endure a trivial wrong. It was for this that at a later period, I did violence to my own heart, and married, for another's happiness, where I knew that no possibility of my own existed. Ah, how profound is my love for you, since it forces me into these egotisms for which you will inevitably despise me! Nevertheless, I must now speak to you the truth or nothing. It was mere indulgence, then, of the sense to which I refer, that, at one dark epoch of my late life, for the sake of one who, deceiving and betraying, still loved me much, I sacrificed what seemed in the eyes of men my honor, rather than abandon what was honor in hers and in my own.—But, alas! for nearly three years I have been ill, poor, living out of the world; and thus, as I now painfully see, have afforded opportunity to my enemies—and especially to one, the most malignant and pertinacious of all friends.—[The next line is entirely obliterated.—C. F. D.]

to slander me, in private society, without my knowledge, and thus with impunity. Although much, however, may (and I now see must) have been said to my discredit, during my retirement, those few who, knowing me well, have been steadfastly my friends, permitted nothing to reach my ears—unless in one instance, where the malignity of the accuser hurried her beyond her usual caution, and thus the accusation was of such a character that I could appeal to a court of justice for redress. The tools employed in this instance were Mr. Hiram Fuller, Mr. T. D. English. I replied to the charge fully, in a public newspaper—afterward suing the *Mirror* (in which the scandal appeared) obtaining a verdict and obtaining such an amount as, for the time, completely to break up that journal. And you ask me, *why* men so misjudge me—why I have enemies. If your knowledge of my character and of my career does not afford you an answer to the query, at least it does not become me to suggest the answer. Let it suffice that I have had the audacity to remain poor that I might preserve my independence—that, nevertheless, in letters, to a certain extent and in certain regard I have been successful—that I have been a critic—an unscrupulously honest and in many cases a bitter one—that I have been uniformly attacked where I attacked at all—those who stood highest in power and in-

fluence—and that, whether in literature or in society, I have seldom refrained from expressing, either directly or indirectly the pure contempt with which the pretensions of ignorance, arrogance, or hostility inspire me.—And you who know all this—*you* ask me *why* I have enemies. Ah, Helen, I have a hundred friends for every individual enemy—but has it never occurred to you that you do not live among my friends? Miss Lynch, Miss Fuller, Miss Blackwell, Mrs. Ellet—neither these nor any within their influence, are my friends. Had you read my criticisms generally, you would see, too, how and why it is that the Channings—the Emerson and Hudson coterie—the Longfellow clique, one and all—the cabal of the *N. American Review*—you would see why all these, whom *you* know best, know me least and are my enemies. Do you not remember with how deep a sigh I said to you in Providence—"My heart is heavy, Helen, for I see that your friends are not my own." But the cruel sentence in your letter would not—could not so deeply have wounded me, had my soul first been strengthened by those assurances of your love, which I so wildly—so vainly—and, I now feel, so presumptuously entreated. That our souls are one, every line which you have ever written asserts—but our hearts do not beat in unison. Tell me, darling! to your heart has any angel ever whispered that the very noblest

lines in all human poetry are these—hackneyed though they be!

> I know not—I ask not if guilt's in thy heart:—
> I but know that I *love thee* whatever thou art.

When I first read your letter I could do nothing but shed tears, while I repeated again and again, those glorious, those all-comprehensive verses, till I could scarcely hear my own voice for the passionate throbbings of my heart.

Forgive me, best and only beloved Helen, if there be bitterness in my tone. Towards you there is no room in my soul for any other sentiment than devotion—it is Fate only I accuse: it is my own unhappy nature which wins me as the true *love* of no woman whom by any possibility I could love.

I heard something, a day or two ago, which, had your last letter never reached me, might not irreparably have disturbed the relations between us, but which, as it is, withers forever all the dear hopes upspringing in my bosom. A few words will explain to you what I mean. Not long after the receipt of your Valentine I learned, for the first time, that you were free—unmarried. I will not pretend to express to you what is absolutely inexpressible—that wild—long-enduring thrill of joy which pervaded my whole being on hearing that it was not *impossible* I might one day call

you by the sacred title, wife: but there was one alloy to this happiness—I *dreaded* to find you in worldly circumstances superior to my own. Let me speak freely to you now, Helen, for perhaps, I may never thus be permitted to speak to you again—Let me speak openly—fearlessly—trusting to the generosity of your own spirit for a true interpretation of my own. I repeat, then, that I *dreaded* to find you in worldly circumstances superior to mine. So great was my *fear* that you were rich, or at least possessed of some property which might cause you to seem rich in the eyes of one so poor as I had always permitted myself to be—that, on the day I refer to, I had not the courage to ask my informant any questions concerning you. I feel that you will have difficulty in comprehending me; but the horror with which, during my sojourn in the world, I have seen affection made the subject of barter, had, long since—long before my marriage—inspired me with the resolution that, under no circumstances, would I marry where "interest," as the world terms it, could be suspected as, on my part, the object of the marriage. As far as this point concerned yourself, however, I was relieved the next day, by an assurance that you were wholly dependent upon your mother. May I—dare I add—can you believe me when I say that this assurance was doubly grateful to me by the

additional one that you were in ill health and had suffered more from domestic trouble than falls usually to the lot of woman? and even if your faith in my nature is not too greatly tasked by such an assertion, can you forbear thinking me unkind, selfish, or ungenerous? You cannot: but oh! the sweet dreams which absorbed me at once! dear dreams of a devotional care for you that end only with life—of a tender, cherishing, patient, solicitude which should bring you back, at length to health and to happiness—a care—a solicitude—which should find its glorious reward in winning me, after long years, that which I could *feel* to be *your love!* without well understanding *why*. I had been led to fancy you ambitious: perhaps the fancy arose from your lines:

> Not a bird that roams the forest
> Shall our lofty eyrie share!

but my very soul glowed with ambition for *your* sake, although I have always condemned it for my own. It was then only—then when I thought of you—that I dwelt exultingly upon what I felt that I could accomplish in Letters and in Literary Influence—in the widest and noblest field of human ambition.

"I will erect," I said, "a prouder throne than any on which mere monarch ever sat; and on this throne she—*she* shall be my queen." When

I saw you, however,—when I touched your gentle hand—when I heard your soft voice, and perceived how greatly I had misconceived your womanly nature—these triumphant visions melted sweetly away in the sunshine of a love ineffable; and I suffered my imagination to stray with you, and with the few who love us both, to the banks of some quiet river, in some lovely valley of our land. Here, not too far secluded from the world, we exercised the taste controlled by no conventionalities, but the sworn slave of a Natural Art, in the building for ourselves a cottage which no human being could ever pass without an ejaculation of wonder at its strange, weird, and incomprehensible, yet most simple beauty. Oh, the sweet and gorgeous, but not often rare flowers in which we half buried it!—the grandeur of the little-distant magnolias and tulip-trees which stood guarding it—the luxurious velvet of its lawn—the lustre of the rivulet that ran by the very door—the tasteful yet quiet comfort of the interior—the music—the books—the unostentatious pictures—and, above all, the love—the *love* that threw an unfading *glory* over the whole! Ah, Helen! my heart is, indeed, breaking and I must now put an end to these divine dreams. Alas! all is now a dream; for I have lately heard that of you which (taken in connection with your letter and with that of which your letter does not

assure me) puts it forever out of my power to ask you—again to ask you—to become my wife. That *many* persons in your presence, have declared me wanting in honor, appeals irresistibly to an instinct of my nature—an instinct which I feel to be honor, let the dishonorable say what they may, and forbids me, under such circumstances, to insult you with my love:—but that you are quite independent in your worldly position (as I have just heard)—in a word *that you are comparatively rich while I am poor*, opens between us a gulf—a gulf, alas! which the Sorrow and the slander of the world have rendered forever impassable by me.

I have not yet been able to procure all the criticisms, etc., of which you spoke, but will forward them by express, in a day or two. Meantime I enclose the lines by Miss Fuller; and "The Domain of Arnheim," which happens to be at hand, and which, moreover, expresses *much of my soul*.—It was about the 10th. of Sep., I think, that your sweet MS. verses reached me in Richmond. I lectured in Lowell on the 10th. of July. Your first letter was received by me at Fordham on the evening of Saturday Sep. 30. I was in Providence, or its neighborhood, during the Monday you mention. In the morning I revisited the cemetery—at 6 P. M. I left the city in the Stonington train for N. Y. I cannot explain to you—

since I cannot myself comprehend—the feeling which urged me not to see you again before going—not to bid you a second time *farewell.* I had a sad foreboding at heart. In the seclusion of the cemetery you sat by my side—on the very spot where my arm first tremblingly encircled your waist.

EDGAR.

"Very soon after Poe's letter of Oct. 18, 1848," wrote Mrs. Whitman, "and before I had replied to it, he came again to Providence. During this visit he told me much of his earlier life—much of his intimate history—and I became more and more deeply interested in him. He seemed to connect me strangely with his memories of Helen Stanard and often declared to me that he had known and loved me ages ago.

"The name of Helen had a strange charm for him from an incident that happened in his boyhood. The mother of one of his schoolmates, who had spoken a few kind words to the imaginative child, died suddenly and left a sweet and sorrowful memory in his heart that seems never to have faded.

"I believe that the spirit of her who bore this beloved name, has always hovered around him, and that it was in some way, through *her* influence that he was drawn to *me.* You may think this fanciful, but many strange incidents suggestive of such psychal influences occurred

to me at that period of my life. One evening, just after dusk, I went into a room dimly lighted by a coal fire. Poe was sitting dreamily musing by the fire-side. In a corner of the room hung an unframed picture painted on a very dark background. It was sketched for me many years ago by Giovanni Thompson, who married a sister of Mrs. Ritchie. As I entered the room Poe started up and said 'Helen, I have had such strange dreams since I have been sitting here that I can hardly believe myself awake! Your picture in this dim light looked so like the face of Robert Stanard that it startled me. You remember that he was the schoolmate of whom I have spoken to you, the son of Mrs. Helen Stanard whom I loved so well. I never noticed the resemblance before, but when you *see him*, as you one day will, you will see how strikingly this picture resembles him.'

"Hanging as it did, in deep shadow the face might well have startled one on suddenly turning toward it, as something strange and fantastic, but the fact of the resemblance deeply impressed me in connection with my remembrance of the weird fantasies in some of his stories.*

* It is impossible to ascertain how great the resemblance was which existed between Mrs. Whitman and Poe's schoolmate, but the portrait of Robert Stanard presented in the volume shows a certain marked similarity of feature.

"During this visit I promised him that I would write to him fully and definitely at Lowell, where he was going at the invitation of friends to deliver a lecture, having been invited to do so by persons who had heard him while he was in that city in the preceding June, or July. There was great excitement just then over the pending presidential election and the time was unfavorable to the projected arrangements for a lecture."

Mrs. Whitman delayed writing to Poe at Lowell. dreading to say the word which would separate them forever, and yet not being able to make up her mind to give him the desired answer. At last, she sent him an indecisive note to which he replied by the statement that he should be in Providence the following evening. On arriving, there, however, he did not see Mrs. Whitman, but, instead, journeyed on to Boston in a state of extreme depression which resulted in an attempt to commit suicide by taking a heavy dose of laudanum.

This drug merely made him ill, and as soon as he was able to throw off its effect, he returned again to Providence, and on the morning of his arrival called on Mrs. Whitman; she was not prepared to see him at so early an hour, and sent him word that she would meet him at noon at the Athenæum, which was a favorite resort of hers.

There Poe and Mrs. Whitman subsequently

ROBERT STANARD

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spent considerable time together, and the building contains various reminders of them. Mrs. Whitman's portrait by Thompson hangs upon the walls, and among the fine examples of Malbone's work may be seen the beautiful miniature of Nicholas Power, Mrs. Whitman's father.

Among the Athenæum's other treasures is a volume of Colton's *American Review*, for 1847, the December number of which contains the anonymous poem "Ulalume," with Edgar Allan Poe's signature attached. It is said that Mrs. Whitman, who was at the time of the incident engaged to Poe, asked him one day when they were together in the Athenæum, if he had read this poem, and if he knew the author? He surprised her by acknowledging that he had written it, and then taking up the library copy of the magazine he signed his name at the end of the poem.

In response to Mrs. Whitman's suggestion that he meet her at the Athenæum, on the occasion in question, Poe writes that he is ill and unable to keep such an appointment:

DEAREST HELEN:

I have no engagement, but am *very* ill—so much so that I must go home, if possible—but if you say "stay," I will try to do so. If you *cannot see me*—write me *one word* to say that you do love me and that *under all cir-*

cumstances, you will be mine. Remember that these coveted words you have never yet spoken —and, nevertheless, I have not reproached you. It was not in my power to be here on Saturday as I proposed, or I would undoubtedly have kept my promise. If you can see me, even for a few moments do so—but if not write—or send some message which will comfort me.

Tuesday Nov. 7.

EDGAR POE TO S. H. W.

76 Benefit St.—Providence.

As a result of his having taken the dose of laudanum, Poe remained for some days in a very excitable state, and it was during the remainder of this stay in Providence that the scenes took place which Mrs. Whitman describes as follows:

"In an interview with Mr. Poe some three or four weeks previous to his lecture before the Lyceum, he had vehemently urged me to an immediate marriage. As an additional reason for delaying a marriage which, under any circumstances, seemed to all my friends full of evil portents, I read to him some passages from a letter which I had recently received from one of his New York associates. He seemed deeply pained and wounded by the result of our interview, and left me abruptly saying that if we met again, it would be as strangers. He did not return to New York,

but passed the evening in the bar-room of his hotel."

Mrs. Whitman then explains that although far from being in a normal condition on the following morning, he was persuaded to have his picture taken at that time, which doubtless accounted for the look of dissipation depicted on his countenance in the daguerreotype then produced.

She goes on to say:

"A gentleman by the name of MacFarlane, who had been very kind to him during the night and who had become greatly interested in him, persuaded him to go with him in the morning to the office of Masury and Hartshorn where the daguerreotype of which I have spoken so often was taken. Poe was moody and silent while there. Soon after he left the office he came alone to my mother's house in a state of wild and delirious excitement calling upon me to save him from some terrible impending doom. The tones of his voice were appalling and rang through the house. Never have I heard anything so awful, awful even to sublimity.

"It was long before I could nerve myself to see him. My mother was so much moved by his suffering that she urged me to soothe him by promising all that he might require of me.

"After he had been in the house (my mother was with him) more than two hours, I entered

the room. He hailed me as an angel sent to save him from perdition, and once when my mother requested me to have a cup of coffee prepared for him, he clung to my dress so frantically as to tear away a piece of the muslin I wore. In the afternoon he grew more composed and my mother sent for Dr. A. H. Okie (the same who wrote the paragraphs I sent from the Providence *Journal* signed 'Medicus,' in reply to Fairfield's epileptic theory) who advised his being taken to the house of his friend W. J. Pabodie where he was most kindly cared for.

"Of course gossip held high carnival over these facts, which were told doubtless with every variety of sensational embellishment and illustration."

Poe's next letter is written on November 14, 1848, just after leaving Providence, at which time he had obtained Mrs. Whitman's consent to a conditional engagement:

My Dearest Helen:

So kind, so true, so generous (—so unmoved by all that would have moved one who had been less an angel—beloved of my heart, of my imagination, of my intellect, life of my life, soul of my soul)—dear, dearest Helen, how shall I ever thank you as I ought—I am calm and tranquil and but for a strange shadow of coming evil which haunts me I should be

happy. That I am not supremely happy, even when I feel your dear love at my heart terrifies me. What can this mean? Perhaps, however, it is only the necessary reaction after such terrible excitements.

It is five o'clock and the boat is just being made fast at the wharf. I shall start in the train that leaves New York at 7 for Fordham. I write this to show you that I have not *dared* to break my promise to you. And now, dearest Helen, be true to me.

[A postscript was originally affixed to this letter in which Poe made grateful acknowledgment of Mr. William J. Pabodie's kindness to him during his recent illness in Providence. Mr. Pabodie borrowed the letter after Mrs. Whitman had made a transcript of the above portion of it and afterward told her that he had either lost or mislaid it.]

Poe's next communication was penned on November 22:

Wednesday Morning

My Dearest Helen—Last Monday I received your note, dated Friday, and promising that on Tuesday I should get a long letter from you. It has not yet reached me, but I presume will be at the P. O. when I send this in— In the mean time I write these few words to thank you from the depths of my heart,

for the dear expressions of your note—expression of tenderness so wholly undeserved by me—and to assure you of my safety and health. The terrible excitement under which I suffered, has subsided, and I am as calm as I well could be, remembering what is past. *Still* the Shadow of Evil *haunts* me, and although tranquil, I am unhappy. I dread the Future—and you alone can reassure me. I have so much to say to you, but must wait until I hear from you. My mother was delighted with your wish to be remembered and begs me to express the pleasure it gave her.

Forever your own,

EDGAR.

CHAPTER VII

POE'S LOVE-LETTERS
(CONCLUDED)

IN his next letter Poe pours out his heart to his betrothed upon the subject of Mrs. Ellet, who seems to have deserved all the charges brought against her. During Poe's life she never ceased to vent her animosity upon him, and after his death she continued to exercise her ingenuity in undermining his reputation. For some time, she exerted considerable influence over Griswold, but having lost her ascendancy over him she turned against him and did everything in her power to injure him and make his last days miserable, inflicting upon him the retribution which, his record seems to prove, was only too well earned.

In Poe's sixth letter, which was written to Mrs. Whitman on Friday, November 24, he exclaims:

"In a little more than a fortnight, dearest Helen, I shall once again clasp you to my heart: until then I forbear to agitate you by speaking of my wishes—of my hopes, and especially of my fears. You say that all depends on my own firmness. If this be so, all is safe—for the terrible agony known only to

my God and to myself—seems to have passed my soul through fire and purified it from all that is weak. Henceforward I am strong:—this those who love me shall see—as well as those who have so relentlessly endeavored to ruin me. It needed only some such trial as I have just undergone, to make me what I was born to be, by making me conscious of my own strength.—But all does not depend, dear Helen, upon my firmness—all depends upon the sincerity of your love.

"You allude to having been 'tortured by reports which have all since been explained to your entire satisfaction.' On this point my mind is fully made up. I will rest neither by night nor by day until I bring those who have slandered me into the light of day—until I expose them, *and their motives* to the public eye. I have the means and I will ruthlessly employ them. On one point let me caution you, *dear* Helen. No sooner will Mrs. Ellet hear of my proposals to yourself, than she will set in operation every conceivable chicanery to frustrate me:—and, if you are not prepared for her arts, she will *infallibly* succeed—for her whole study, throughout life, has been the gratification of her malignity by such means as any other human being would die rather than adopt. You will be sure to receive anonymous letters as skilfully contrived as to deceive the most sagacious. You will be

called on, possibly, by persons whom you never heard of, but whom she has instigated to call and vilify me—without their being aware of the influence she has exercised. I do not know any one with a more acute intellect about such matters as Mrs. Osgood—yet even she was for a long time completely blinded by the arts of this fiend, and simply because of her generous heart could not conceive how any woman could stoop to machinations at which the most degraded of the fiends would shudder. I will give you here but one instance of her baseness and I feel that will suffice. When, in the heat of passion—stung to madness by her inconceivable perfidy and by the grossness of the injury which her jealousy prompted her to inflict upon all of us—upon both families—I permitted myself to say what I should not have said—I had no sooner uttered the words, than I felt their dishonor. I felt, too that, although she must be damningly conscious of her own baseness, she would still have a right to reproach me for having betrayed, under any circumstances, her confidence. Full of these thoughts, and terrified almost to death lest I should again, in a moment of madness, be similarly tempted, I went immediately to my secretary—(when these two ladies* went away)—made a package of her letters, addressed them to her, and with my own hand

* Miss Lynch and Margaret Fuller.

left them at her door. Now Helen, you cannot be prepared for the diabolic malignity which followed. Instead of feeling that I had done all I could to repair an unpremeditated wrong—instead of feeling that almost any other person would have retained the letters to make good (if occasion required) the assertion that I possessed them—instead of this, she urged her brothers and brother-in-law to demand of me the letters. The position in which she thus placed me you may imagine. Is it any wonder that I was driven mad by the intolerable sense of wrong? If you value your happiness, Helen, beware of this woman. She did not cease her persecutions here. My poor Virginia who was continually tortured (although never deceived) by her anonymous letters, on her death-bed declared that Mrs. Ellet had been her murderer. Have I not the right to hate this fiend and caution you against her? You will now comprehend what I mean in saying that the only one thing for which I found it impossible to forgive Mrs. Osgood was her reception of Mrs. Ellet."

In reference to this episode which caused the breaking off of Poe's association with Mrs. Osgood, Mrs. Whitman says: "Certain benevolent ladies, friends of the invalid wife, were in the habit of visiting the cottage in Fordham and ministering to the comfort of the family. One of these ladies chanced to see there an

open letter written by Mrs. Osgood which was thought to be of a compromising character. She called on Mrs. Osgood, remonstrated with her on her imprudence, prevailed upon her to break off the correspondence, and obtained her consent that a committee of ladies should demand in her behalf the return of the letters. Margaret Fuller, the late Countess D'Ossoli, was I believe one of the ladies who undertook the commission, and Miss Anna C. Lynch, now Mrs. Botta, was another; it was from her that I received the account I am giving you, but the instigator of the movement was a 'distinguished lady of South Carolina' (Mrs. Ellet).

"The ladies preceded to Fordham and presented their credentials. Whereupon the poor Raven driven to desperation ruffled his black plumes and denounced the fair ambassadresses as busybodies adding injury to insult by saying that Mrs. Ellet had better look to her own letters. Now this was very indiscreet and very reprehensible and nobody knew this better than himself."

Mrs. Whitman pronounces the story which had been circulated, of Poe's borrowing money from the same lady and refusing to pay until forced by the lady's brother, absolutely "incredible." There was, she thinks, something for which Poe reproached himself, and which may have given rise to the "perfidious story."

Mrs. Whitman in a subsequent communica-

tion describes Mrs. Ellet, "whose name," she says, "you will find in the Encyclopedia of Literature, and in Poe's 'Literati,' which though apparently correct in its estimates of her intellectual efforts apparently betrays the hostility and resentment of the writer. . . . The lady is, or was rather unpopular in New York though she has some friends who speak of her as enterprising and efficient in inaugurating public and private readings, for charitable purposes. She commenced a correspondence with me two or three years after Poe's death. It was in reference to matters in no way connected with him, but it soon ceased."

Undoubtedly Mrs. Ellet exercised considerable influence over Griswold at one period when she persuaded him to allow her to occupy a desk in his office, where she might carry on her literary work and collaborate with him; it has been recorded, however, that after Griswold had discovered her in the act of reading over his private letters, he ordered her to relinquish the post assigned her, as well as the latch-key which had been put at her disposal. That she afterward pursued Griswold with her hatred has been frequently recorded, and it was well known to the public of her day that after Griswold's marriage to his third wife, she brought charges against him to prove that his divorce from his second wife was illegal. Griswold finally issued a printed pamphlet in which

he denounced her and endeavored to justify his own conduct.

Poe's tribute to Mrs. Ellet in "The Literati," exhibits his attitude toward her, and probably did something to increase her animosity toward him. He wrote:

"She has been long before the public as an author. . . . She first made her debut as the writer of 'Teresa Contarini,' a five act tragedy, which had considerable merit, but was withdrawn after its first night's representation at the Park. . . . The ill success of the play had little effect in repressing the ardor of the poetess, who has since furnished numerous papers to the magazines. . . . Her articles are for the most part in the *refacimento* way, and although no doubt composed in good faith, have the disadvantage of looking as if hashed up for just as much money as they will bring. The charge of wholesale plagiarism, which has been adduced against Mrs. Ellet, I confess that I have not felt sufficient interest in her works to investigate, and am therefore bound to believe it unfounded. . . . In person, short and much inclined to embonpoint."

Whatever may have been this lady's manners, or morals, and no matter how fiercely she may have exercised her animosity toward Poe, it is evident that his discouraging critique did not dampen her enthusiasm for literary production; for years she continued to produce voluminous

works composed of eulogistic descriptions of famous women of ancient and modern times; among these books may be mentioned one called "Queens of American Society," in the pages of which, it may be noticed, she did not include those rivals in the literary world who had aroused her enmity. In the course of an introduction to one of these books she says:

"Should the perusal of my book inspire with courage and resolution any woman who aspires to overcome difficulties in the achievement of honorable independence, or should it lead to a higher general respect for the powers of women among those destined for position in the realm of art, my object will be accomplished."

If one glances through a few pages devoted to the consideration of all the noblest qualities of womanhood, which Mrs. Ellet was prone to attribute to her heroines, one can but wonder that her own methods were not materially influenced by this association. But judging from the data which are extant, the author of "Queens of Society" was far from queenly in her methods of procedure.

An example of her literary integrity was brought to public notice in 1868, when she sold to the Harpers a story of Western life entitled "Mary Nealy"; this, upon later examination, proved to be an almost exact transcription of a story entitled "Mary Spears," which she had

sold to the Putnams in 1853. This lady died on June 3, 1877.

Poe's association with Margaret Fuller, who was one of the group that visited him at Fordham, was hardly a pleasing one, and her attempt to break up his friendship with Mrs. Osgood was keenly resented by him. Her inclination to be both aggressive and opinionated did not commend itself to his fancy, and it is recorded that on certain occasions when they met in company the sparks flew between them. Upon one special evening Poe came gallantly into the conversational breach to rescue a young author, whom Miss Fuller was annihilating with extreme scorn. Poe with a few strong and pointed remarks, destroyed the effect of the learned lady's eloquence, much to her discomfort, and probably to the secret satisfaction of the assembled company, for some one present whispered: "The Raven has perched upon the casque of Pallas, and pulled all of her feathers out of her cap."

Poe, having recounted to Mrs. Whitman his experience with his feminine persecutors, closes his letter with a reference to the treatment that he has received from Mrs. Whitman's mother and sister, who have made their opposition quite plain to him:

Be careful of your health, dearest Helen, and perhaps all will yet go well. Forgive me that

I let these wrongs prey upon me—I did not so bitterly feel them until they threatened to deprive me of you. I confess too, that the insults of your mother and sister still rankle at my heart but for your dear sake I will endeavor to be calm.

Your lines "To Arcturus" are truly beautiful. I would retain the Vergilian words—omitting the translation. The first note leave out:—61 Cygni has been proved nearer than Arcturus and Alpha Lyræ is presumably so.—Bessel, also, has shown 6 other stars to be nearer than the brighter one of this hemisphere —There is obvious tautology in "pale candescent." To be *candescent* is to become *white* with *heat*. Why not read—"To blend with thine its incandescent fire?" Forgive me sweet Helen, for these very stupid and captious criticisms. Take vengeance on my next poem. When "Ulalume" * appears, cut it out and enclose it:—newspapers seldom reach me. In last Saturday's *Home Journal* is a letter from M. C. (who is it?) I enclose a passage which seems to refer to my lines:

> —the very roses' odors
> [Died in the arms of the adoring airs.]

The accusation will enable you to see how groundless such accusations may be, even when

* This refers to a reprint of the poem which had been first issued in 1847.

seemingly best founded. Mrs. H.'s book was published 3 months ago. You had my poem about the first of June—was it not?

Forever your own EDGAR.

Remember me to Mr. Pabodie—Mrs. Burgess and Mrs. Newcomb.

Fordham,
November 24th, 1848.

Poe's reference to Mrs. Whitman's poem, "To Arcturus," may be supplemented by the author's own account of it. Mrs. Whitman wrote to her friend Davidson:

"The lines, as published in the Winnsboro' paper, you will find in *Graham's Magazine* for 1850. As you may infer from the poem, Poe regarded this star with peculiar interest. One evening in the autumn of 1848, just as he was leaving the city for his home near New York, he said something to me about Arcturus which I promised to remember in looking at it.

"An hour or two after he left the city certain reports were communicated to my family in relation to him which augmented almost to a frenzy my mother's opposition to the relation then subsisting between us. Yet at parting he had won from me a rash promise that nothing I might hear to his discredit from others should induce me to break the conditional promise I had given him. During the painful scenes which followed, which I would

if possible banish forever from my remembrance, I chanced to look towards the western horizon and saw there Arcturus shining resplendently through an opening in the clouds, while of all the neighboring constellations, I could see only Orpheus, in the head of the serpent, still glimmering near with a pale and sickly lustre.

"To my excited imagination everything at that time seemed a portent or an omen. I had been subjected to terrible mental conflicts, and was but just recovering from a painful and dangerous illness. That night, an hour after midnight, I wrote, under a strange accession of prophetic exaltation, the lines 'To Arcturus' 'written in October.' The words from Virgil occurred to my mind, and were prefixed to them; though why I should have then thought them appropriate I cannot tell. I only remember that as I repeated the Latin words they had a sound so majestic so exultant so full of solemn and triumphant augury that the remembrance of it, even now, fills me with mystic joy. In the spring of 1850, after Edgar's death, I wrote the additional lines and sent them to *Graham's Magazine*, where they were published under my signature in the following June."

ARCTURUS

(Written in October.)

"Our star looks through the storm"

Star of resplendent front! thy glorious eye
Shines on me still from out yon clouded sky,—
Shines on me through the horrors of a night
More drear than ever fell o'er day so bright,—
Shines till the envious Serpent slinks away,
And pales and trembles at thy steadfast ray.

Hast thou not stooped from heaven, fair star! to be
So near me in this hour of agony?—
So near,—so bright,—so glorious, that I seem
To lie entranced as in some wondrous dream,—
All earthly joys forgot,—all earthly fear,
Purged in the light of thy resplendent sphere:
Kindling within my soul a pure desire
To blend with thine its incandescent fire,—
To lose my very life in thine, and be
Soul of thy soul through all eternity.

1849.

The second poem "To Arcturus" (written in April) opens with the stanza:

Again, imperial star! thy mystic beams
Pour their wild splendors on my waking dreams,
Piercing the blue depths of the vernal night
With opal shafts and flames of ruby light;
Filling the air with melodies, that come
Mournful and sweet, from the dark, sapphire dome,—
Weird sounds, that make the cheek with wonder pale,
As their wild symphonies o'er sweep the gale.

Two days after Poe's previous letter he forwarded the following communication to Mrs. Whitman:

Sunday evening 26.

I wrote you yesterday, sweet Helen, but, through my fear of being too late for the mail omitted some things I wish to say. I fear too, that my letter must have seemed cold—perhaps even harsh or selfish—for I spoke nearly altogether of my own griefs. Pardon me, my Helen, if not for the love I bear you, at least for the sorrows I have endured—more, I believe, than have often fallen to the lot of man. How much have they been aggravated by my own consciousness that, in too many instances, they have arisen from my own culpable weakness or childish folly!—my sole hope now, is in you, Helen. As you are true to me or fail me, so do I live or die.

I forgot to enclose your poem and do so now. Why have you omitted the two forcible lines—

> While in its depths withdrawn, far, far away,
> I see the dawn of a diviner day?

—is that dawn no longer perceptible?

Who wrote the verses signed "Mary," I am unable to say.

Can you solve the riddle of the poem enclosed? It is from last Saturday's *Home Journal*. Somebody sent it to me in MS.

Was I right, dearest Helen, in my first impression of you?—you know I have implicit faith in first impressions. Was I right in the idea I had adopted before seeing you—in the idea that you were ambitious? If so, and *if you will have faith in me*, I can and will satisfy your wildest desires. It would be a glorious triumph, Helen, for us—for you and me. I dare not trust my schemes to a letter—nor, indeed, have I room even to hint at them here. When I see you I will explain all—as far, at least, as I dare explain all my hopes even to you.

Would it *not* be "glorious," *darling*, to establish in America, the sole unquestionable aristocracy—that of intellect—to secure its supremacy—to lead and control it? All this I can do, Helen, and will—if you bid me—and aid me.

I received yesterday a letter from Mr. Dunnell. He says that they have 'lost' their lecturer for the 6th. prox. and offers me that night instead of the 13th. I have written him, however, that I cannot be in Providence before the 13th.

My kindest regards to Mr. Pabodie.

Devotedly—

[To this letter Mrs. Whitman adds "signature and postscript cut out to give to James T. Fields, 1865.]

"P. S.—Preserve the printed lines. I send the MS.—Perhaps you may recognize it. As one of the signs of the times I notice that Griswold has lately copied my Raven in his Hartford *Weekly Gazette*—I enclose his editorial comments so that you have quite a budget of enclosures."

[A second postscript follows.]

"P. S.—I open this letter, *dearest love*, to ask you to mail me, as soon as possible, three articles of mine which you will find among the critical papers I gave you—viz: 'The Philosophy of Composition'—Tale Writing—Nathl. Hawthorne—and a review of Longfellow's poems. I wish to refer to them in writing my lecture and can find no other copies. Do not fail to send them dear—dear Helen, as soon as you get this. Enclose them in a letter—so that I may be sure to get them in season.

"Mrs. B's 'Ida Grey' is in *Graham* for August—45."

Poe's next letter to Mrs. Whitman bears the date (added in her handwriting), of December 17, 1848.

Prior to this time, the impassioned courtship had progressed rapidly, and Poe's dreams of a speedy marriage seemed likely to be

realized. Despite the opposition of her mother and sister, a reluctant consent had been wrung from Mrs. Whitman, who while acceding to her tempestuous wooer yet realized the rashness of her decision.

Among Mrs. Whitman's papers was found the request from Poe for the publication of the bans of marriage between the two, which read:

Will Dr. Crocker have the kindness to publish the banns of matrimony between Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman and myself, on Sunday and on Monday. When we have decided on the day of the marriage we will inform you, and will thank you to perform the ceremony.

Respy yr. St
EDGAR A. POE.

On December 15 a contract was drawn up in the interest of Mrs. Whitman's mother and sister, who, having failed to break up the match, had doubtless insisted that some arrangement should be made by which Poe should be prevented from having any claim upon the family income. In this paper Mrs. Whitman relinquished her share of the estate from the date of her intended marriage. The document is as follows:

Contract Concerning Marriage between Poe and Mrs. Whitman

Providence Dec. 15, 1848

To Charles F. Tillinghast Administrator with the will annexed of the estate of Ruth Marsh late of Providence.

You are hereby required in conformity to the provisions of the will of the above named Ruth Marsh to pay to me the Subscriber the Whole of the Estate of the said Ruth Marsh now in your possession or control—the said Estate consisting of Bank Stocks and Notes as follows namely

Fifteen Shares of the Merchants Bank

Ten	do	Globe
Five	do	Blackstone Canal Bank
Six	do	Exchange

William H. Cooke's Note for One Thousand dollars.

Talman & Bucklin's Note for Two Thousand dollars.

Benjamin Allen: Notes for Eight Hundred & Eighteen dollars.

Weston A. Fisher's Note for Fifteen Hundred dollars.

All of which Notes are secured by Mortgage of Real Estate.

ANNA POWER.
EDGAR A. POE.

Signed this fifteenth day of December 1848
In presence of
HENRY MARTIN
WILLIAM J. PABODIE.

Providence December 15, 1848

We Sarah Helen Whitman and Susan Anna Power legatees named in the will of the within named Ruth Marsh and to whom such part of the principal or Interest of the Estate of the said Ruth Marsh as shall remain undisposed of at the decease of our mother the within named Anna Power is given hereby unite in the preceding request of Anna Power that the whole of the Estate of the said Ruth Marsh now in his possession be transferred to our said mother for her own use. And in consideration of such conveyance to be made by him we hereby release him the said Charles F. Tillinghast from all claims and demands which we have or may have on account of the said Estate of the said Ruth Marsh.

In witness whereof we have hereto set our Hands and Seals the fifteenth of day of December 1848.

SARAH HELEN WHITMAN [L. S.]
SUSAN ANNA POWER [L. S.]

In presence of HENRY MARTIN.

Whereas a Marriage is intended between the above named Sarah H. Whitman and the Subscriber Edgar A. Poe.—I hereby approve of and assent to the transfer of the property in the manner proposed in the papers of which the preceding are copies—

Providence, December 22, 1848.

EDGAR A. POE.

In presence of WILLIAM J. PABODIE.

At this point in the courtship the outlook for the contracting parties can hardly be pronounced a hopeful one. Poe was exceedingly poor, and Mrs. Clemm, his Virginia's mother, was wholly dependent upon him, while visions of his tragic struggle with poverty and sickness prior to his young wife's death, still haunted him cruelly. His betrothed, who was about to relinquish her modest income, was afflicted with heart-disease, and shrank from undue exertion and excitement. She dreaded "scenes," and suffered acutely from the opposition of her mother and sister. Although naturally of a romantic disposition, she had arrived at an age when her emotions were not likely to dominate her actions completely. And it is doubtful if she ever really believed that the marriage with Poe would take place.

Poe's next letter shows that his recent experience with his prospective mother-in-law still rankles in his heart. He writes:

Dec 17. 1848 New-York City—
Saturday, 2. P. M.

My own dearest Helen — Your letters — to my mother & myself — have just been received, & I hasten to reply, in season for this afternoons mail. I cannot be in Providence until Wednesday morning; and, as I must try and get some sleep after I arrive, it is more than probable that I shall not see you until about 2. P. M. Keep up heart — for all will go well. My mother sends her dearest love and says she will return good for evil & treat you much better than your mother has treated me. Remember me to Mr. P. & believe me

Ever your own

Edgar.

FAC-SIMILE OF LETTER WRITTEN BY POE TO MRS. WHITMAN

My Own Dearest Helen—Your letters—to my mother and myself—have just been received, and I hasten to reply, in season for this afternoon's mail. I cannot be in Providence until Wednesday morning; and, as I must try and get some sleep after I arrive, it is more than probable that I shall not see you until about 2 P. M. Keep up heart—*for all will go well.* My mother sends her dearest love and says she will return good for evil and treat you much better than your mother has treated me.

Remember me to Mr. P. and believe me

Ever your own

Edgar.

Thus ended Poe's last love-letter to Mrs. Whitman, written shortly before the breaking off of the engagement.

That he fully expected that the wedding ceremony was about to be performed is registered in a brief note to Mrs. Clemm, which reads:

My Own Dear Mother—We shall be married on Monday, and will be at Fordham on Tuesday, in the first train.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BROKEN ENGAGEMENT AND POE'S DEATH

WITH the forwarding of the brief message to Mrs. Clemm, "We shall be married on Monday," Poe seemed very near that goal, the attainment of which might have changed the whole trend of his career. This marriage would have brought him an intellectual mate, who would have striven earnestly to aid him in the fulfilment of his highest possibilities, for in this inspirational quality Mrs. Whitman excelled.

While she could hold her faith in Poe's regeneration through her influence, Mrs. Whitman was willing to disregard the strenuous interference of her family and friends, but with the knowledge of Poe's failure to keep his pledge to her, came the conviction of the hopelessness of her endeavor to lift him from the depths where he was sinking deeper and deeper. Anxiety for their financial welfare did not distress her, for she firmly believed that her own life was very near its close; she felt that death was soon to separate her from those whom she loved, and was content to dedicate her failing strength to the redemption of one whose mag-

netic personality had awakened in her the strongest emotion of her life.

In her own words, Mrs. Whitman has graphically set forth the final interview with Poe, at which her mother and Mr. Pabodie were present; and Mr. Pabodie has also left on record his account of the affair, in which he seems to have played no unimportant part.

On this occasion Poe had come to Providence to lecture upon "American Poetry" before the Lyceum, where he was received by an audience of two thousand persons, and it was during this stay in the city that he succeeded in obtaining Mrs. Whitman's consent to an immediate marriage. He stopped at the Earl House where, according to Pabodie, he became acquainted with a set of somewhat dissipated young men, who repeatedly invited him to drink with them. On the third or fourth night after his lecture he came to Mrs. Whitman's house in a state of partial intoxication; he was not either excitable or talkative but merely showed that he had been drinking.

The following morning he was exceedingly remorseful and was profuse in his apologies. He wrote, upon that day, the note to Doctor Crocker requesting him to publish the intended marriage, intrusting this note to Pabodie, who undoubtedly took charge of it with the conviction strong in his mind that circumstances would shortly arise to prevent its delivery.

It has been stated that during the afternoon of the day in question much pressure was brought to bear on Mrs. Whitman to break off the match, and it is probable that Pabodie, when he accompanied Poe to the lady's house on that second evening, was well assured that no stone had been left unturned to convince Mrs. Whitman of the folly of continuing the engagement.

The scene which ensued has been often described. Mrs. Whitman herself quite ill, and worn out by worry and argument, returned to Poe certain letters and papers, then dropping upon a couch and placing a handkerchief drenched in ether to her face she relapsed into a semiconscious state.

Poe fell upon his knees beside her and continued his protestations, begging her to reconsider and to speak to him.

Finally in response to his appeals for a reply, she murmured: "What can I say?"

"Say that you love me, Helen!"

She answered: "I love you," these being the last words that she ever addressed to him.

In the meantime Mrs. Power had taken the situation into her own hands, and while her daughter lay half fainting upon the lounge, she freely expressed her mind to Poe, not mincing her words or sparing her opponent because of his literary genius. The exact substance of her remarks has never been divulged, but it is re-

MRS. NICHOLAS POWER

corded that at their close she reminded Poe that the New York train left at a not-far-distant hour.

Then Poe, turning to his friend Pabodie, exclaimed:

"Mr. Pabodie you hear how I am insulted," and, taking the other's arm, quickly left the house.

"Poe returned to New York that evening," wrote Mrs. Whitman subsequently, "in the Stonington Express train, accompanied to the cars by Mr. Pabodie, who with my mother was present at our last interview.

"Of course the incident caused a great deal of gossip and the wildest and most exaggerated stories were in circulation concerning the breaking of the engagement and his reported expulsion from the house.

"Three weeks after his return to Fordham he wrote me a letter filled with expressions of wounded feeling and bitter indignation against my family (to whom he probably attributed these exaggerated and injurious stories) and entreated me by the love that had subsisted between us to write him at once to assure him that I, at least, had not authorized their circulation.

"Dreading that an answer to this letter might lead to a renewal of the harrowing scenes I had passed through I did not reply to it.

"I was utterly hopeless of my power to sustain or comfort him. I longed to assure him of

my unalterable interest in his welfare and happiness but I dared not incur the consequences of further direct communication with him."

Of Poe's last letter to Mrs. Whitman only a fragment is presented in the collection issued by the University of Virginia, but it is certain that Mrs. Whitman gave Ingram an almost complete copy, which he inserted in his "Memoir" with but a few omissions.

This letter which follows, was received in January and must have been the communication which Poe enclosed in a letter to his friend, Mrs. Richmond, asking her first to read it and then to forward it to Mrs. Whitman.

"No amount of provocation shall induce me to speak ill of *you*, even in my own defense. If to shield myself from calumny, however undeserved, or however unendurable, I find need of resorting to explanations that might condemn or pain you, most solemnly do I assure you that I will patiently endure such calumny, rather than avail myself of any such means of refuting it. You will see, then, that so far I am at your mercy—but in making you such assurances, have I not a right to ask of you some forbearance in return? . . . That you have in any way countenanced this pitiable falsehood, I do not and cannot believe—some person, equally your enemy and mine, has been its author—but what I beg of you is, to write me at once a few lines in explanation—you

know, of course, that by reference either to Mr. Pabodie or . . . I can disprove the facts stated, in the most satisfactory manner—but there can be no need of disproving what I feel confident was never asserted *by you*—your simple disavowal is all that I wish. You will, of course, write me immediately on receipt of this. . . . Heaven knows that I would shrink from wounding or grieving you! I blame no one but your mother. Mr. Pabodie will tell you all. May Heaven shield you from all ill! . . . Let my letters and acts speak for themselves. It has been my intention to say simply that our marriage was postponed simply on account of your ill health. Have you really said or done anything which can preclude our placing the rupture on such footing? If not, I shall persist in the statement and thus the unhappy matter will die quietly away."

In the letter to "Annie" (Mrs. Richmond), to whom this was enclosed, Poe writes that he has been deeply wounded by the cruel statements about himself which she had quoted in a previous letter to him as purporting to come from Mrs. Whitman and her friends. He says that it is inevitable that "*her friends*" should speak ill of him but evidently doubts that Mrs. Whitman herself has done so. His excitable nature is stirred by what has been repeated, and he desires to prove to "Annie" that Mrs. Whitman has not been disloyal to him; this he

presumably thinks will be conclusively settled by his allowing her to see both his own letter and the looked-for reply.

Viewed in the light of the knowledge of Poe's impulsive and excitable temperament this letter to "Annie" does not carry the weight or signify the disloyalty on his part to Mrs. Whitman that some critics seem to have assigned it. The tone of bravado which he assumes in the same letter in assuring "Annie" of his present happiness and his greatly increased literary success, is suggestive of a mood of violent reaction from his late suffering and chagrin. And the resentment which rankles deeply breaks forth in his closing lines:

"Rest assured, 'Annie,' from this day forth I shun the pestilential society of *literary women.* They are a heartless, unnatural, venomous, dishonorable set, with no guiding principle but inordinate self-esteem. Mrs. Osgood is the only exception I know. . . . I have had a distressing headache for the last two weeks."

It is easy to imagine that this letter and various others which first came to Mrs. Whitman's knowledge long after Poe's death should have grieved her exceedingly.

Her reasons for not replying to Poe's letter were no doubt reinforced by the action of her mother and sister, who probably did everything in their power to prevent the reopening of the Poe correspondence. It is certain, however,

that Mrs. Whitman was in her heart troubled by the thought that she had vouchsafed no answer to Poe's last appeal, and her subsequent publication of the verses, entitled "Our Island of Dreams," indicates clearly that she was desirous that Poe should know that she still truly cared for him.

In a second communication written by Poe to "Annie" a few weeks after the former one, he remarks: "I have got no answer yet from Mrs. Whitman. . . . My opinion is that her mother has intercepted the letter and will never give it to her. . . ."

A month later Poe says in the course of another letter to "Annie": "I wish you would write to your relation in Providence and ascertain for me *who* slandered me as you say—I wish to prove the falsity of what has been said (for I find that it will not do to permit such reports to go unpunished), and especially, obtain for me some *details* upon which I can act. . . ."

The failure of Poe to receive the looked-for response from Mrs. Whitman probably continued to rankle keenly in his heart, and he doubtless allowed himself to voice his resentment in occasional bitter remarks, some of which were bound to make their way back to Providence through the instrumentality of ever-alert friends. One of these was Mrs. Locke, who having previously fallen out with Poe,

endeavored to retaliate through Mrs. Whitman. Of this lady Mrs. Whitman writes to a friend:

"In the spring of 1849 Mrs. Locke wrote to me expressing an earnest wish to make my acquaintance. I received many urgent invitations to visit her. I promised to spend a few days with her in May, fixing the day. I went and liked her and her husband very much. After I had spent a few days with her I began to suspect that she hoped to pique the 'Raven' by exhibiting me as her guest or perhaps bring about a reconciliation with him through my means. At any rate she told me as an inducement for me to prolong my stay a day or so after the time fixed for my departure, that she had taken care that he should hear of my visit and she had reason to think he would be in Lowell during the time appointed for my stay. My heart thrilled at the thought of seeing him again but I could not accept her request.

"We passed each other on the road. I did not know it until a letter from Mrs. Locke informed me of the fact. If you were not such a sceptic as to spiritual or magnetic phenomena I could tell you of a strange incident which happened as the two trains rushed past each other between Boston and Lowell."

In writing to Mrs. Clemm of Mrs. Locke Mrs. Whitman says:

"Her object in seeking my acquaintance was unquestionably to prevent my renewal of my

correspondence with Mr. Poe, by whom she conceived herself to have been deeply wronged. During the summer of 1849, I received many letters from her in which there were frequent allusions to the subject that so deeply engrossed her feelings. I saw, however, that she was too much under the influence of wounded pride to exercise a calm judgment in the matter, and said but little in reply to her representations. After Mr. Poe's death she wrote to me to say that he had spoken disrespectfully of me to his friends in Lowell. In reply I made no allusion whatever to the paragraph in question. In her next letter she repeated the assertion. I passed it in silence as before. She then came to Providence and passed a night with me. On her attempting to introduce the subject which she had so often touched upon in her letters I interrupted her by saying that I did not wish to listen to any charges against one whose memory was dear and sacred to me,—that if false they could not now be refuted,—if true, I could understand and forgive them. . . .

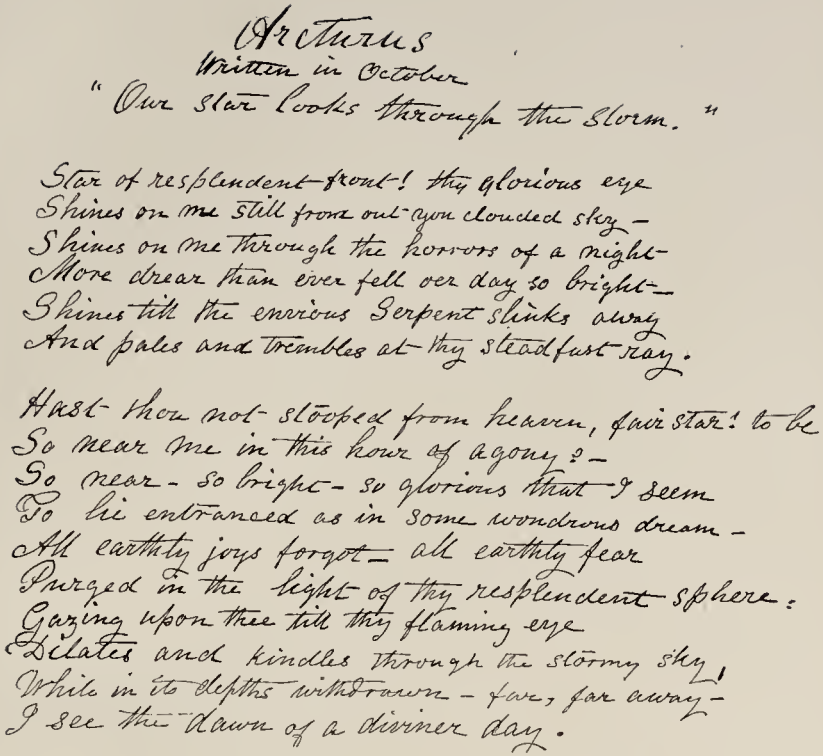
"I fear from her own confessions, that she has sometimes used my name *very unwarrantably* to endorse her own opinions of Mr. Poe's character. In a letter to Mr. Willis, written about the time of Edgar's death, she ventured to do so—citing me as authority for some impressions which she entertained with regard to his moral character. I wrote Miss Lynch at the time,

requesting her to set Mr. Willis right on the matter, but as some coolness then existed between Miss Lynch and myself I am ignorant whether the request was ever complied with."

Mrs. Whitman was still turning over in her mind the possibility of addressing to Poe some final response, which she felt he properly deserved, when a demand reached her for a poem from Israel Post, who was about to issue in New York the first number of the *American Metropolitan Review.*

Shortly before the breaking of the engagement Poe had suggested that she send the lines "To Arcturus" to the opening number of this periodical, for which she understood he was to furnish book reviews; he had copied the lines in his own handwriting for this purpose, but after the severing of the relations the publication of this poem seemed inappropriate and Mrs. Whitman says of the incident:

"The editor wrote to remind me of my promise and to say that the magazine was just going to press. I found in a hurried search among my manuscripts and papers a copy of unpublished 'Stanzas for Music,' written several years before as an accompaniment to an Italian air for the Guitar. Here was an indication of what Macbeth calls 'fate and metaphysical aid.' I saw that Poe might interpret the last verse as a response to the entreaty made me in the letter which I had not dared to answer.


Arcturus
Written in October
"Our star looks through the storm."

Star of resplendent front! thy glorious eye
Shines on me still from out yon clouded sky –
Shines on me through the horrors of a night
More drear than ever fell over day so bright –
Shines till the envious Serpent slinks away
And pales and trembles at thy steadfast ray.

Hast thou not stooped from heaven, fair star! to be
So near me in this hour of agony? –
So near – so bright – so glorious that I seem
To lie entranced as in some wondrous dream –
All earthly joys forgot – all earthly fear
Purged in the light of thy resplendent sphere:
Gazing upon thee till thy flaming eye
Dilates and kindles through the stormy sky,
While in its depths withdrawn – far, far away –
I see the dawn of a diviner day.

FAC-SIMILE OF ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT OF MRS. WHITMAN'S POEM "ARCTURUS"

"I sent the stanzas to Mr. Post and they appeared in the February number, which did not come out, I think, until the middle of March, when the publisher failed and the magazine was discontinued.

"I cannot doubt that these words were received by Poe as a peace-offering to his wounded and outraged feelings, nor can I doubt that in writing 'Annabel Lee,' the strange sweet song so charming in spite of its vagueness and obscurity, that he intended I should read in it the veiled expression, visible to no eyes but mine, of his undying remembrance. . . .

"I had not seen these verses for years, and as I then re-read them they sounded so strangely sweet and mournful, so expressive of all that I would have wished to say . . . that I sent them without venturing to give them a second look.

"I transcribe to you from memory a copy of my verses published in the *American Metropolitan Review*."

OUR ISLAND OF DREAMS

Tell him I lingered alone on the shore,
Where we parted, in sorrow, to meet nevermore;
The night wind blew cold on my desolate heart,
But colder those wild words of doom, "Ye must part!"

O'er the dark, heaving waters, I sent forth a cry;
Save the wail of those waters there came no reply.

I longed, like a bird, o'er the billows to flee,
From our lone island home and the moan of the sea:

Away—far away—from the wild ocean shore,
Where the waves ever murmur, "No more, never more";
Where I wake, in the wild noon of midnight, to hear
That lone song to the surges, so mournful and drear.

When the clouds that now veil from us heaven's fair light,
Their soft, silver lining turn forth on the night;
When time shall the vapors of falsehood dispel,
He shall know if I loved him; but never how well.

1849.

Mrs. Whitman goes on to affirm:

"Of course Edgar believed the verses to have reference to himself; of course, believing them he would devise some subtle answer whose meaning should be full of significance to me. Now I doubt if any reader has ever formed to himself a very clear conception of the ballad of 'Annabel Lee.' Is the subject of the poem living or dead?"

Mrs. Whitman points out the significance of the reference to the "highborn Kinsmen" who "bore away" Annabel Lee, asserting that Poe would hardly have used the words, "high-born" and "Kinsmen," as descriptive of angels who were bearing some one to a heavenly realm.

"Now," she assests, "I will tell you what I suppose to have been the veiled meaning of this passage." She goes on to say that during the winter of 1849 she was suffering from chills and

fever and her physician advised her to spend the the winter with relatives in South Carolina; she decided that she would do so and planned to take a steamer from New York to Charleston. She wrote to Mrs. Osgood telling of this arrangement and asking her to meet her on board the boat, but at the last moment, the plan was relinquished and friends in New Bedford insisted that Mrs. Whitman should go to them; she therefore wrote to Mrs. Osgood that "just as she was about to seek the soft and balmy airs of the south some of her northern friends had '*caught her up*' and '*borne*' *her away* to the stern and rockbound shores of Massachusetts."

Mrs. Whitman asserts that during her absence Poe passed through Providence and also sent the last letter, which she did not receive for weeks after it was written.

"Poe saw my letter to Mrs. Osgood," Mrs. Whitman states, "and referred to the words I used in the verse which has so puzzled the critics.

"Of course," she concludes, "the filling up of the poem is in many ways purely imaginative. Yet every line and expression has a definite meaning when he speaks of the 'voice more familiar than his own.'

"Nevertheless I do not doubt that the poem may have had in his mind other shades of meaning and may have been in some way associated with other persons."

Mrs. Whitman placed much stress on Poe's introduction of the words:

> The wind came out of the cloud by night,

which she compared with her own line:

> The night wind blew cold on my desolate heart.

In Redfield's "Memoir" it is asserted that "Annabel Lee" was addressed "to a Rhode Island lady," but most of the biographers are inclined to agree with Mrs. Osgood's statement that it was written to Poe's wife, Virginia.

However, in a communication to her friend, James Wood Davidson, Mrs. Whitman throws some light upon the origin of Mrs. Osgood's statement, which seems to have been made not so much because she felt sure that Poe wrote the lines to his wife, as to prevent their being appropriated by Mrs. Lewis, whom she greatly disliked.

Mrs. Whitman recounts that in consequence of the financial aid proffered by Mrs. Lewis to the Poe family during Virginia's last days, Mrs. Clemm was anxious to pay Mrs. Lewis a special compliment, and that upon a certain occasion Mrs. Clemm stated to Mrs. Lewis that "Edgar wrote the ballad 'Annabel Lee' *to her.*" A mutual friend, Mrs. Hewitt, who was present at this time, and heard the remark, hastened back to Mrs. Osgood with the account of Mrs. Clemm's assertion.

Mrs. Osgood was determined that Mrs. Lewis should never go down to posterity as the true "Annabel Lee," and as Mrs. Hewitt recounts: "Mrs. Osgood's lip curled and she at once sat down to pen her comments on the poem for Griswold's 'Memoir,' in the course of which she points out that Poe's ballad was written to his Virginia, '*the only woman Poe ever loved.*' "

"I knew," Mrs. Hewitt writes to Mrs. Whitman, "that Fanny (Osgood) could not for a moment have believed this statement, and I saw that the lines were dictated by pique." Mrs. Hewitt concludes: "She wrote the comments on 'Annabel Lee,' in Griswold's 'Memoir,' not with reference to you, dear Mrs. Whitman, but only hoping to 'put Mrs. Lewis down.' "

A fourth possible claimant for "Annabel Lee" is "Annie," Mrs. Richmond, to whom Poe enclosed a copy of the verses in a letter, saying that he was sending them for her to read, but not stating that the verses were written to her. Undoubtedly Mrs. Clemm, in another of her generous moods, assured "Annie" that the poem was *really hers*, because of the similarity of name as well as the compliment paid her by being vouchsafed the first reading and a copy of the MS.

The "Annabel Lee" mystery will probably never be solved, and it ill becomes Mrs. Whitman's biographer to question that lady's evi-

dence in her own favor. It was a satisfaction to her to think that Poe had accepted her olive-branch of peace, and had sent back a final message, even though it were so closely veiled as almost to defy recognition. Yet from a knowledge of the poet's proud and sensitive nature, and his tendency to magnify every affront to its highest degree, it seems likely that Poe did not forgive his ex-fiancée for not frankly replying to his note of protest and assuring him that she had never spoken ill of him, and that all reports of her having done so were unfounded. This was what he asked for and did not receive, and statements which he is said to have made later in Richmond concerning Mrs. Whitman's trying vainly to effect a reconciliation with him, probably arose from the memories which still rankled and were not dispelled by the perusal of "Our Island of Dreams," or of another poem sent by Mrs. Whitman to the *Southern Messenger* a few months later, beginning: "The fault was mine, mine only."

In her poem, entitled "The Last Flowers," Mrs. Whitman has embodied her feelings in regard to her parting with Poe. This poem bears the date September, 1849, which was two months before Poe's death, and from the text one may gather the suggestion that these verses also were meant for Poe's perusal.

Dost thou remember that Autumnal day
When by the Seekonk's lonely wave we stood,

And marked the languor of repose that lay,
Softer than sleep, on valley, wave, and wood?

A trance of holy sadness seemed to lull
The charmèd earth and circumambient air,
And the low murmur of the leaves seemed full
Of a resigned and passionless despair.

Though the warm breath of summer lingered still
On the lone paths where late her footsteps passed,
The pallid star-flowers on the purple hill
Sighed dreamily, "We are the last! the last!"

I stood beside thee, and a dream of heaven
Around me like a golden halo fell!
Then the bright veil of fantasy was riven,
And my lips murmured, "Fare thee well!—farewell!"

I dared not listen to thy words, nor turn
To meet the mystic language of thine eyes,
I only felt their power, and in the urn
Of memory, treasured their sweet rhapsodies.

We parted then forever,—and the hours
Of that bright day were gathered to the past,—
But through long wintry nights, I heard the flowers
Sigh dreamily, "We are the last!—the last!"

Poe's last days have been so frequently described as to need but the briefest summary. Upon June 27, 1849, he left Fordham for Richmond, where for a time he seems to have plunged into dissipation from which he gradually emerged through the intervention of kind friends. His final weeks in Richmond were de-

voted to literary work and to the planning for the publication of *The Stylus*, which was to realize his literary ambition in periodical form. Meanwhile he had renewed his acquaintance with his boyhood's sweetheart, Mrs. Shelton, who has recorded that at this time she saw only the most approved and dignified behavior on his part.

As has been stated, Poe's friends had long before suggested the wisdom of a marriage with Mrs. Shelton, who was a practical, warm-hearted woman, and could provide him with a comfortable home of which he was sorely in need, as well as financial aid for both himself and Mrs. Clemm.

The wisdom of such a step was recognized by Poe, who had, according to his statements made to Mrs. Whitman, already contemplated this match the previous year, and who still cherished the desperate hope of being saved from himself by some woman's restraining hand.

Mrs. Shelton was prevailed upon to look with favor on the suit which Poe pressed with his usual impetuosity. A speedy marriage was arranged and Mrs. Clemm was notified that her old age would be provided for by this practical union.

It was said that October 17 was chosen for the date of the wedding, before which event Poe felt that it was necessary to make certain arrangements in New York. On September 27

he left Richmond upon a boat which arrived in Baltimore the following day. Upon October 3 Poe was picked up unconscious on the streets of Baltimore, and it will never be absolutely known whether he was the victim of foul play or merely of his own sad weakness. He died at the Washington University Hospital on October 7, 1849, aged forty years.

He left behind him a goodly number of enemies, and a small group of loving, loyal friends, among whom Sarah Helen Whitman stands pre-eminent.

Her sonnets, written shortly after his death, have taken their place among the permanent contributions to American poetry, and her poem entitled "Resurgemus," which follows, is one of the sincere tributes which she paid to Poe's memory.

I mourn thee not: no words can tell
The solemn calm that tranced my breast
When first I knew thy soul had past
From earth to its eternal rest;

For doubt and darkness, o'er thy head,
Forever waved their Condor wings;
And in their murky shadows bred
Forms of unutterable things;

And all around thy silent hearth,
The glory that once blushed and bloomed
Was but a dim-remembered dream
Of "the old-time entombed."

Those melancholy eyes that seemed
To look beyond all time, or, turned
On eyes they loved, so softly beamed,—
How few their mystic language learned.

How few could read their depths, or know
The proud, high heart that dwelt alone
In gorgeous palaces of woe,
Like Eblis on his burning throne.

For ah! no human heart could brook
The darkness of thy doom to share,
And not a living eye could look
Unscathed upon thy dread despair.

I mourn thee not: life had no lore
Thy soul in morphean dews to steep,
Love's lost nepenthe to restore,
Or bid the avenging sorrow sleep.

Yet, while the night of life shall last,
While the slow stars above me roll,
In the heart's solitudes I keep
A solemn vigil for thy soul.

I tread dim cloistral aisles, where all
Beneath are solemn-sounding graves;
While o'er the oriel, like a pall,
A dark, funereal shadow waves.

There, kneeling by a lampless shrine,
Alone amid a place of tombs,
My erring spirit pleads for thine
Till light along the Orient blooms.

Oh, when thy faults are all forgiven,
The vigil of my life outwrought,

In some calm altitude of heaven,—
The dream of thy prophetic thought,—

Forever near thee, soul in soul,
Near thee forever, yet how far,
May our lives reach love's perfect goal
In the high order of thy star!

CHAPTER IX

MRS. WHITMAN'S SONNETS TO POE

I

VAINLY my heart had with thy sorceries striven:
It had no refuge from thy love,—no Heaven
But in thy fatal presence;—from afar
It owned thy power and trembled like a star
O'erfraught with light and splendor. Could I deem
How dark a shadow should obscure its beam?—
Could I believe that pain could ever dwell
Where thy bright presence cast its blissful spell?
Thou wert my proud palladium;—could I fear
The avenging Destinies when thou wert near?—
Thou wert my Destiny;—thy song, thy fame,
The wild enchantments clustering round thy name,
Were my soul's heritage, its royal dower;
Its glory and its kingdom and its power!

II

When first I looked into thy glorious eyes,
And saw, with their unearthly beauty pained,
Heaven deepening within heaven, like the skies
Of autumn nights without a shadow stained,

I stood as one whom some strange dream enthralls;
For, far away, in some lost life divine,
Some land which every glorious dream recalls,
A spirit looked on me with eyes like thine.
E'en now, though death has veiled their starry light,
And closed their lids in his relentless night—
As some strange dream, remembered in a dream,
Again I see, in sleep, their tender beam;
Unfading hopes their cloudless azure fill,
Heaven deepening within heaven, serene and still.

III

Oft since thy earthly eyes have closed on mine,
Our souls, dim-wandering in the hall of dreams,
Hold mystic converse on the life divine,
By the still music of immortal streams;
And oft thy spirit tells how souls, affied
By sovran destinies, no more can part,—
How death and hell are powerless to divide
Souls whose deep lives lie folded heart in heart.
And if, at times, some lingering shadow lies
Heavy upon my path, some haunting dread,
Then do I point thee to the harmonies
Of those calm heights whereto our souls arise
Through suffering,—the faith that doth approve
In death the deathless power and divine life of love.

IV

We met beneath September's gorgeous beams:
Long in my house of life thy star had reigned;
Its mournful splendor trembled through my dreams,
Nor with the night's phantasmal glories waned.
We wandered thoughtfully o'er golden meads
To a lone woodland, lit by starry flowers,
Where a wild, solitary pathway leads
Through mouldering sepulchres and cypress bowers.
A dreamy sadness filled the autumnal air;—
By a low, nameless grave I stood beside thee,
My heart according to thy murmured prayer
The full, sweet answers that my lips denied thee.
O mournful faith, on that dread altar sealed—
Sad dawn of love in realms of death revealed!

V

On our lone pathway bloomed no earthly hopes:—
Sorrow and death were near us, as we stood
Where the dim forest, from the upland slopes,
Swept darkly to the sea. The enchanted wood
Thrilled, as by some foreboding terror stirred;
And as the waves broke on the lonely shore,
In their low monotone, methought I heard
A solemn voice that sighed, "Ye meet no more."

There, while the level sunbeams seemed to burn
Through the long aisles of red, autumnal gloom,—
Where stately, storied cenotaphs inurn
Sweet human hopes, too fair on Earth to bloom,
Was the bud reaped, whose petals, pure and cold,
Sleep on my heart till Heaven the flower unfold.

VI

If thy sad heart, pining for human love,
In its earth solitude grew dark with fear,
Lest the high sun of Heaven itself should prove
Powerless to save from that phantasmal sphere
Wherein thy spirit wandered—if the flowers
That pressed around thy feet, seemed but to bloom
In lone Gethsemanes, through starless hours,
When all, who loved, had left thee to thy doom:—
Oh, yet believe, that, in that hollow vale
Where thy soul lingers, waiting to attain
So much of Heaven's sweet grace as shall avail
To lift its burden of remorseful pain,—
My soul shall meet thee and its Heaven forego
Till God's great love, on both, one hope, one Heaven bestow.

CHAPTER X

CLEMM-WHITMAN CORRESPONDENCE

AFTER Poe's death Mrs. Whitman remained a warm and constant friend to Mrs. Clemm, as is shown by their correspondence. She furnished money to buy her medicines and many little comforts, and in response to letters, which invariably suggested that the writer was in need of "more," continued to give generously all that she could afford.

No better testimony as to the sincerity of the affection cherished for Poe by his women friends is needed than that offered by the example of their willingness to open their homes to his mother-in-law. After Poe's death, in 1849, Mrs. Clemm spent some time with Mrs. Lewis, returning later to make her home with this friend for a couple of years; she passed some months with Mrs. Houghton, who offered to keep her indefinitely; and for a much longer period lived with Mrs. Richmond, in Lowell, who also proffered her hospitality for an unlimited period.

Although she had never met Mrs. Whitman, it is probable that Mrs. Clemm had thoughts of eventually going to stay with her, and a vision

of her sudden appearance for the purpose of taking up her residence in Providence gave Mrs. Whitman some uneasy hours. In one of her replies to Mrs. Clemm she says: "Had I a home of my own, how earnestly I should wish to have you with me—to hear you speak of him whose memory is so dearly cherished by us."

Mrs. Clemm's letters contain a characteristic mixture of the expression of her devotion to her "Eddie," her tender solicitude for his friends, and her plaintive presentation of her own need for pecuniary help.

In September, 1851, she requests Mrs. Whitman to use her influence with friends to purchase from her copies of "darling Eddie's books." She says:

"The publisher only allows me for the present as many copies as I choose to dispose of, but owing to great delicacy of feeling (on account of that hateful memoir), I can only avail myself of this privilege through the kindness of friends. I have heard my Eddie speak with so much gratitude of Mr. Pabodie's great kindness to him whilst in Providence, that I think perhaps he will extend that kindness to myself, by endeavoring to dispose of one or two copies for me." . . . She closes with the words: "How much I would like to become acquainted with you for my dear Eddie did love you so very dearly."

This letter and another dated in October of

the same year seem to have been written from the home of Mrs. Houghton in New York. In the second communication Mrs. Clemm discusses a suggestion from Mrs. Whitman in regard to disposing of more books, then she continues: "I have, with my kind friends here a very pleasant home, and it is their wish for me to make it a permanent one. My proud spirit shrinks from any pecuniary favors from them. Therefore when I can dispose of a few copies of the books, it prevents me being under obligation to any one."

After sending a message of appreciation to Mr. Pabodie, she says: "I sincerely hope I may soon have the pleasure of becoming acquainted with you. I think I would recognize you instantly from the description my darling Eddie gave me of you. My friends think me very like him, but I know it is only a family resemblance. My friend Mrs. Houghton often says she can almost fancy he is speaking to her, when I am sad and talking earnestly. Alas I am often sad. Oh, how sad! when I think of all my dear ones. The only consolation I feel is knowing that I shall soon be with them. Pardon me dear friend for speaking thus, but you know it is just two years since my precious Eddie left me forever, and to a cold heartless world."

That Mrs. Clemm's activity in seeking assistance from Poe's women friends was also extended to the men who had known him in

literary circles is evinced by numerous letters among which were several sent to James Russell Lowell, which are almost identical with those addressed to Mrs. Whitman at the same period.

Whatever might have been Griswold's true attitude toward Mrs. Clemm, whose character and disposition he attacked violently in letters to Mrs. Whitman and Mr. Pabodie, he certainly obtained from her by means of protestations of friendship, control of Poe's letters and manuscripts, and in her name begged favors of those whom he felt he could best reach in that way. A characteristic communication addressed to Lowell, in 1849, sets forth his pretended reluctance to edit Poe's works and his seeming interest in the welfare of Mrs. Clemm.

He writes: "Poe was not my friend. I was not his and he had no right to devolve upon me this duty of editing his works. He did so, however, and under the circumstances I could not well refuse compliance with the wishes of his friends here. . . . It is a difficult task, but I shall execute it as well as I can, in the short time allowed to me. . . .

"If you will revise your Memoir and continue it down to the death of Poe, it will be of very great advantage to Mrs. Clemm, who is to receive all the profits which are not retained by the bookseller. My services will be altogether gratuitous.

"I wrote a very hasty notice of Poe for the *Tribune*, the night of his death. A part of it is quoted in the last *Home Journal*. Though badly done, I think it is essentially just."

Griswold's seeming reluctance to assume the task of biographer and his efforts to prove that Poe had thrust the work upon him may be viewed in the light of Poe's own remarks made to Lowell in 1843 when he inquired in a letter, "Who is to write your life for *Graham?* It is a pity that so many of these biographies were entrusted to Griswold. He certainly lacks independence, or judgment, or both."

It is evident that Poe would not have chosen Griswold as his biographer, even if he did think that he might edit his works, and it is also evident that Griswold loved Mrs. Clemm no better than he did her son-in-law.

This he made clear to Mrs. Whitman immediately after Poe's death, when he wrote in response to her protest regarding his harsh obituary:

NEW YORK, Dec. 17, 1849.

MY DEAR MRS. WHITMAN

I have been two or three weeks in Philadelphia, attending to the remains which a recent fire left of my library and furniture there; and so did not receive your interesting letter in regard to our departed acquaintance until yesterday.

I wrote—as you suppose—the notice of P(oe) —in the *Tribune*—but very hastily. I was not his friend, nor was he mine, as I remember to have told you, but I endeavored always to do him justice; and though that sketch of him has been deemed harsh, I did not mean that it should be so.

I undertook to edit his writings to oblige Mrs. Clemm, and this work will be published in two thick volumes, of which a copy shall be sent you. I have done very little more than to arrange them and read the proofs. Enough are omitted for another volume, and I shall perhaps hereafter prepare one, of his correspondence and miscellanies.

I saw very little of Poe in his last year, and know nothing from *him* of his feelings toward you. Mrs. Osgood, I am confident had not seen him, nor written to him a syllable, in more than two years, and she received from you only one brief note, soon after her return from Providence, when she was quite ill. On her recovery, it was too late for her to answer it. I believe she intends very soon (she is now again quite ill) to write to you. I never heard, and I should not have believed if I had heard, that you spoke of Poe unkindly. I can understand very well the contradictory and extraordinary influences of his genius and his habits of life upon you. That such influences as you seem to suspect, were used with him, seems very probable. But you

may err in regard to their origin. I do not wish, of course, to involve myself in any such private feuds as a knowledge that I so write to you would occasion, but I cannot refrain from begging you to be very careful what you say to, or write to, Mrs. Clemm, who is not your friend, nor anybody's friend, and who has no element of goodness or kindness in her nature—but whose whole heart and understanding are full of malice and wickedness. I *confide in you* these sentences, for your own sake only—for Mrs. Clemm appears to be a very warm friend to me. Pray destroy this note, or, at least, act *cautiously*, till I may justify it in conversation with you.

I was told that all your letters to Poe had been sent back to you since his death. It seems this was not true. When his correspondence (or parts of it) was placed in my hands, I asked for your letters, judging from intimations I heard, that they had been preserved, and wishing myself to forward them to you. . . .

I write very hastily; but I trust not altogether illegibly.

I am yours very sincerely,

RUFUS W. GRISWOLD.

The question of what became of Mrs. Whitman's letters to Poe has never been answered. Both Griswold and Mrs. Clemm denied all knowledge of them, though it seems likely that

the latter, in the process of burning up a portion of the correspondence which she desired to keep from Griswold, may have allowed these missives to vanish in smoke.

On May 6, 1852, Mrs. Clemm writes to Mrs. Whitman from Mrs. Richmond's home in Lowell. She tells of having been there for some months, and recites a melancholy tale of recent sufferings from neuralgia and other ailments. During this trying period she has longed for her dear Virginia and Eddie to speak words of consolation, and she murmurs: "But alas I never shall hear those beloved voices again.—I sincerely thank you for the enclosure in your letter. I was infinitely more gratified with your kind attention than (although acceptable) with the money. . . . I intend some time in June to visit Fall River for a few weeks, and will then call and see you—you little know how much I wish to do so. Will you have the goodness to present my regards to Mr. Pabodie, I hope to have the pleasure to thank him in person for his kindness to my poor Eddie. I hope you will write me often."

In her reiteration of the gratitude felt by Poe for Pabodie's kindness, Mrs. Clemm brings to mind the interesting question of the part really played by Pabodie in the drama of Poe's last days.

Briefly summed up: He seems to have played the part of everybody's friend; a rôle which

always savors somewhat of insincerity. Griswold boldly acknowledged to Mrs. Whitman that he "was not Poe's friend," but Pabodie figured as his intimate during his whole association with Providence, took him to his home, obtained his confidence, and became his inseparable companion. Why did he do it? Was it for the love of Poe, for whom he seems to have expressed no real affection or even warm feeling in the communications which have come down to us?

Pabodie was an ardent admirer of Mrs. Whitman, and his attachment to Poe seems to have dated from the moment that he perceived that Poe was laying siege to her affections. He believed most implicitly, as did the rest of Mrs. Whitman's friends, that there could be no happiness for her in such a match, and he acknowledged subsequently that he did everything within his power to break it off. This he might have done for the sake of Mrs. Whitman, if not for his own, but could he have done it honorably for Poe's sake?

As Poe's friend he should have done his best to keep the other from temptation, and have aided in the consummation of Poe's desire, or at least left the matter wholly in Mrs. Whitman's hands. The evidence all goes to point out that he did what he could to destroy Poe's chances and to hasten the termination of the engagement. It is not known who tempted Poe

to drink before he paid a visit to Mrs. Whitman, but it is certainly true that Pabodie did not hesitate to accompany him to her house when Poe was not himself. In short, while he appeared to Poe as his one friend and true supporter amidst a hostile throng, he was undoubtedly the finger of fate that intervened to break off this engagement and snatch from Poe an opportunity which might have opened for him a new and more auspicious era; one can but wonder what his feelings were when upon Poe's last evening in Providence he walked away from Mrs. Whitman's house with him, soothing Poe's indignation with friendly words. This we shall never know, but this we do know that Poe and Mrs. Whitman were both convinced that in him each had a true, disinterested friend—and perhaps they were right.

Mrs. Whitman's next letter to Mrs. Clemm shows that the latter is busily endeavoring to get into her hands every available bit of Poe's writing, and hopes that Mrs. Whitman may furnish something.

The latter writes:

"I was gratified to learn from my friend, Miss Carpenter, that she had the pleasure of seeing you while she was in Lowell and to receive through her a kind message from you.

"I believe she told me that you had some thought of writing me in regard to some Manuscripts of Edgar's which you supposed to be

in my possession. I think she must have misunderstood you, and that you must have referred to the copies of the *Broadway Journal*, which he left with me.

"With the exception of 'Letters and Notes' I have no manuscripts of his, saving two pages of a lecture* which he delivered in Lowell, in the summer of 1848. He brought it to Providence when he was here in September. On one of these pages was a notice of my own poetry, as compared with that of Mrs. Osgood, and Miss Lynch. The notice being very complimentary, I naturally wished to obtain from him a copy of it. He replied to my request by tearing out the leaf and presenting it to me, saying he would replace it by a more elaborate notice. These pages I retain and I have often thought that I should like to see the remainder of the lecture. Can you tell me what has become of it? . . . I hope that I may have the pleasure of seeing you if you return home by the way of Providence."

On November 23, 1854, Mrs. Clemm is once more with Mrs. Lewis in Brooklyn, and she writes that it is long since she has heard from Mrs. Whitman. "I have been with Mrs. Lewis for more than a year, and will remain here for at least this winter. The continued unhealthy state of Louisiana has prevented me going to

*In this lecture, entitled "The Female Poets of America," Poe highly praised Mrs. Whitman's work.

my dear kind friends there. They urge me so affectionately to go to them that I am sometimes tempted to brave every danger and venture. I do so long once more to have some one to comfort and love me, as those dear ones did. Oh! my precious ones, I regret them more every day. . . . Do write me dear one as soon as you receive this."

Although apparently none too content under the Lewis roof, Mrs. Clemm is still writing from there on February 9, 1857, at which time she pleads for the assistance which shall enable her to go South. "I do much wish to leave here and go to my friends in the south. This I cannot accomplish for want of means, will you aid me with a small portion of the requisite sum? *When I tell you, I am most unhappy here, and my health very miserable*, I think, for the sake of my poor Eddie, you will *not* refuse. At all events dear friend, reply as speedily as you can for if I go, I must go soon."

On November 8, 1858, Mrs. Clemm writes from her next home in Alexandria, Virginia, where she says she is with kind friends, the Reuben Johnstons. This letter is filled with indignation at the slanderous treatment of her dear Eddie in a recent "Memoir" prefixed to the illustrated poems, which she hopes that some one will refute. At the close she remarks: "I suppose you have seen by the papers that Mr. and Mrs. Lewis are divorced. I had a most

uncomfortable home there for a long time. I left her house before they were divorced."

Mrs. Whitman replies to this the following week assuring Mrs. Clemm that those interested in Poe are about to issue a defense of him which will probably appear in one of the leading magazines. (This is a veiled reference to her own "Edgar Poe and His Critics," which she at first intended for a magazine article.)

Early in the year 1859 Mrs. Whitman writes Mrs. Clemm several letters in regard to certain questions which she wishes to settle before issuing her defense of Poe. The first letter is dated March 10, and in it she asks for more information about Mrs. Stanard, the first "Helen," and also about Poe's ancestry in which she has always been much interested.

In a communication dated April 5 Mrs. Whitman says of her article: "I think it will very essentially modify the popular judgment—at least if it should obtain extensive circulation. It has been seen by some of the best scholars and critics of my acquaintance and highly approved by them. It was read by the editor of an influential Religious Monthly and by him commended to the Editors of the *Atlantic*. After detaining it three months it was rejected without explanation. I believe that Mr. Lowell is not disposed to look favorably upon anything written in Edgar's favor.

"My friends wish me to prepare for a second

edition of my poems and if I also publish a small volume of prose, I shall include the article of which I speak."

The little volume of prose never appeared, but the defense of Poe was shortly issued in a small volume by Rudd and Carleton.

On April 14 Mrs. Clemm replies in a long letter which opens with expressions of gratitude for money sent her, by means of which she is enabled to buy medicines and other things which she requires for her health.

She exclaims: "I trust it may be returned to you an hundredfold." She then proceeds to answer the queries about the Stanard family, recounting that the persons with whom she resides are intimate with Mr. William Cassinoe, who married Judge Stanard's daughter; this unfortunate woman has inherited the fatal insanity of her mother, who died in an asylum. Mrs. Clemm declares that the first "Helen" has been dead twenty-six years (a fact which Mrs. Whitman finds incompatible with the knowledge of Poe's early association with her), and she insists that Poe never visited Richmond but once, and that in 1849.

Undoubtedly Mrs. Clemm's memory was at this time by no means what it had once been, and accuracy of statement was never one of that lady's ruling characteristics, even when she was in her prime.

In regard to Robert Stanard, the school

friend of Poe and son of the first "Helen," whose resemblance to Mrs. Whitman's portrait was noted by Poe during an evening at the home of his fiancée, Mrs. Clemm proffers the information that he "married Miss Lyons of Richmond and died four years ago" (about 1855). A picture of Robert Stanard representing him as a man of mature years seems to exhibit some resemblance to Mrs. Whitman as has been suggested, and a glance at pictures of the two will serve to convince one that if Robert resembled his mother there might also have been some resemblance between the two "Helens."

In her response to this letter, written April 17, 1859, Mrs. Whitman reminds Mrs. Clemm that if Mrs. Stanard had been dead only twenty-six years then Edgar would not have been a schoolboy at the Academy at Richmond at the time of her death, but would have been a man twenty-two years old. She discusses at length the subject of Poe's ancestry, about which Mrs. Clemm had made the statement, "Edgar's grandfather was born in Ireland."

Mrs. Whitman advances her favorite theory of their joint ancestry, which has been accepted by some biographers, but seems on the whole untenable by the latest genealogical research, which points to the likelihood of Poe's name coming from that of "Powell" rather than "Poer," as Mrs. Whitman believed.

"Mr. Poe was one day speaking to me of the marked resemblances in certain of our tastes and habits of thought, some of which might be almost termed idiosyncracies, yet were common to both. Assenting to what he said, I added: 'Do you know it has just occurred to me that we may come from distant branches of the same family and that the name of Power, as well as that of Poe, are both variations from the name as originally spelled—I think the correct orthography of the name in both instances is Poer.'

"He looked suddenly up with an expression of surprise and pleasure on his face and said: 'Helen you startle me! for among some papers of my grandfather's there is one in which some reference is made to a certain Chevelier Le Poer, who was a friend of the Marquis de Grammont and a relative of our family.' He said at the time that he would at some future day show me this paper, and seemed very much interested in the matter. My father's ancestors were of Anglo-Norman family who went over to Ireland in the time of Henry II. The founder of the family in Ireland was, I think, Sir Roger Le Poer, who went to Ireland as Marshal to Prince John, in the reign of Henry II. The name Poer is by the historians of Ireland spelled sometimes as Power and sometimes as Poer or De Le Poer."

Although Mrs. Whitman's genealogical con-

clusions as to Poe's ancestry are not accepted by some recent biographers, they have never been absolutely disproved, and there still remains a missing link in the chain to be supplied. An English friend who was aiding Mrs. Whitman in her research work sent her the following item about a member of the Poe family in Ireland, who was apparently more interested in tracing his pedigree than were the members of the Poe family in Baltimore:

"Hutcheson Poë (son of the head of the Irish Poës and an officer in the Royal Marines) called upon me and seemed very desirous of gathering information about the Poe family in America. He had been in Baltimore and called upon the Poes, on Nelson Poe, Junior, and from him did not get a very favorable reception. N. P. Junior said he did not know and did not want to know who his grandfather was, or something to that effect. Hutcheson Poë is, apparently, really an innate gentleman and a handsome looking fellow. He gave me an extract from the *Annual Register* for July 14, 1817, page 60, containing an account of some Scotch emigrants taken over to his Polish estates by Count Poë, of Doospouda, in Poland."

Mrs. Clemm's idea of her own accuracy, which differed considerably from Mrs. Whitman's view of it, is summed up in a letter in which she says: "Anything else I can inform

you of concerning my dear Eddie I will do with great pleasure. Alas my memory is *too* faithful, I often wish I could forget." This letter closes with a suggestion that Edgar's last love has not proved as generous as Mrs. Whitman, in her remembrance of his "more-than-mother": "I have not heard from Mrs. Shelton for a long time, here no one knows her, I cannot ascertain if she is living or no, and she has not been the friend to me that you have, and she is *rich, too*, but I will not blame her, for she I suppose is entirely estranged from me." Mrs. Clemm does not suggest any cause for "estrangement" but one can surmise that it may have been occasioned by too frequent demands for pecuniary aid.

In her next letter, of April 22, 1859, she tries to make it clear to Mrs. Whitman that when a discrepancy arises between a date given by "Eddie" and by herself, *she* is the one to be depended upon; she asserts: "My poor Eddie never could remember dates, but always had to refer to me, and this I suppose is the mistake." (Possibly Poe's habit of giving out several different birth dates may be accounted for by his failure to refer to Mrs. Clemm; on one of these occasions he furnished a date which showed him to have been born two years after his mother's death !)

Mrs. Clemm writes Mrs. Whitman that Mrs. Richmond "still cherishes the memory of dear

Eddie" and continues her kindness to his "desolate mother." She says: "I hear from her once in every week. I never would have left her but for the climate, the physician said I could not survive there." After furnishing more information about the Poe family Mrs. Clemm closes with a suggestion that she is still lacking funds to take her farther south: "I do so fear I will not be able to go to my friends in the fall, I cannot procure the means, I do not know what will become of me. The friends I am now with are exceedingly kind to me, but I have no claim on them, and they have a large family, and, I fear, limited means. The friends I wish to go to, I know are anxious to have me with them, and they are congenial spirits too.

"But I will trust in God, if he thinks proper he will open a way for me. How much I would like to see you face to face, I think I would know you among many, for Eddie has so often described you to me, you little know how he loved you and his agony at parting with you. Oh how few understand my darling Eddie."

Mrs. Clemm may be said to have had a touch of Cromwell in her methods, only in place of "put your trust in God and keep your powder dry" she seems to have substituted the idea of extolling her Maker and writing to Poe's women friends, especially Mrs. Whitman. The fact that Mrs. Shelton did not rise to Mrs. Whitman's altitude of generosity, although possessed of far

greater resources, is again hinted at in this letter, when she asserts: "Poor fellow, he little thought of leaving me so desolate and unprotected. . . . But I would rather have it thus, he never would have been happy in his contemplated marriage (with Mrs. Shelton) and to have seen him unhappy would have broken my heart."

In the interval which follows Mrs. Whitman sends Mrs. Clemm her book, which has just been published, and also the usual financial aid, concerning which the latter says in her next communication:

"I cannot help saying to you, that since my dear Eddie's death, you have been one of my best friends."

Two months later, February 28, 1860, Mrs. Whitman writes in response to Mrs. Clemm's acknowledgment of the book, which is coupled with another demand for some of "Eddie's handwriting":

"I would gladly send you some of Edgar's writing if I had not already parted with nearly everything but his letters, and these I cannot lose. . . ." In a second note, dated the same day, she says: "I was disappointed dear Mrs. Clemm, in my wish to send you what you needed for immediate use. Since I wrote you last we have sustained still further losses through withholding of customary bank dividends on account of Western railroad loans. If what I

inclose can be of use to you it is most heartily at your service. Do not trouble yourself about repayment."

On March 17, 1860, Mrs. Clemm writes that it is her seventieth birthday and that there is no one now remaining to "bless and congratulate" her. She says that Mrs. Whitman's last enclosure has furnished her with medicine and other little comforts, and outlines her work in the frugal household at Alexandria. "I endeavor to be as little expense and trouble as possible. As an equivalent for my board I teach three children from nine until twelve; the rest of the day I devote to sewing for her. About five I retire to my own room, and oh! how I do enjoy being there with my sad, sad memories."

One can well imagine that after a substantial eight-hour day of teaching and sewing "sad memories" were truly a luxury to the poor old lady.

Indeed, sadness seems to have been a lifelong satisfaction to her, and the habit of sharing her sorrows with her friends may be traced back even to those happy days spent with her loved ones, which she so fondly recalled. A young girl who knew her prior to her life at Fordham said of her: "Mrs. Clemm and my mother soon became the best of friends, and she found mother a sympathetic listener to all her sad tales of poverty and want. I would often see her shedding tears as she talked."

Mrs. Clemm's love of misery was, no doubt, like that of her Edgar, of whom Stedman declared:

"Possibly his most exquisite, as well as his most poetic moments, were at those times when he seemed very wretched, and avowed himself oppressed by a sense of doom. He loved his share of pain, and was an instance of the fact that man is the one being that takes keen delight in the tragedy of its own existence, and for whom—

Joy is deepest when it springs from woe.

Wandering among the graves of those he had cherished, invoking the spectral midnight skies, believing himself the Orestes of his race—in all this he was fulfilling his nature. . . . They err who commiserate Poe for such experiences."

On May 20, 1860, Mrs. Clemm writes that she is much distressed at not having heard from her Providence friend; she has sent two letters which have not been answered and she fears for Mrs. Whitman's health. As for herself she has been suffering from bilious dyspepsia, brought on by too long fasting in Lent. But this is only a secondary matter as compared with her anxiety for one who was "so loved by dear Eddie." She writes: "I know how much he loved you. When I go to Heaven, and if it is permitted me to tell him everything, how much

he will rejoice to hear of all your kindness to his desolate mother. I do wish I could see you, if only for a few hours; how much I would have to tell you, particularly about my unhappy home while I was with Mrs. Lewis. My health and spirits were entirely broken down by the continual excitement I went through at that time, but I can pray God to forgive her now, but it has been very long before I could do so."

Mrs. Clemm finds her present position much more enjoyable, there being no friction to contend with, but there are other drawbacks of which she writes Mrs. Whitman in addition to her dependence upon a household provided with very scanty means. She says toward the close of this year that she is recovering from a severe cold which has entirely prostrated her and which has arisen from her unhealthy surroundings. "This place does not agree with me, it lies very low and is always damp. The cellar of this house is always filled with water, which makes it even more unhealthy." In consequence of this she has decided to go to her friend, Miss Robins, who has said that she will arrange to take her to Europe the next autumn and who will defray all expenses. In this letter she, as usual, thanks Mrs. Whitman for her continued kindness, which is presumably in the form of a check.

Her last communication from Alexandria comes at the close of January, 1861, when she

is again distressed at not having heard from Mrs. Whitman, whom her friend, Miss Robins, has reported as ill. She hopes that the illness is not serious, but suggests that in case it should prove so, a small token would be appreciated by her. She asks: "Will you send me a small piece of your hair, I will greatly prize it. I will have it put in a locket with Eddie's and my precious Virginia's. God, I trust, will be with you in life and in death."

Among Mrs. Whitman's possessions there still remains a precious lock of hair cut from the head of Edgar Poe and presented to his "Helen" during their engagement, but there is no record of any of Mrs. Whitman's curls having been given in exchange for it, and it is quite certain that Mrs. Clemm never received the wished-for lock. It may be that a similar request went from her to others who had loved Eddie and who continued to indicate the same by their kindnesses to her, but let us hope that they, too, remained obdurate and that the locket containing Virginia's hair was not transformed into a miniature repository for feminine locks suggestive of that belonging to Bluebeard.

Mrs. Clemm's next home was with her friend Miss Robins, in Putnam, where, as she wrote Mrs. Whitman at the end of August, 1861, the house was "fine and spacious, beautifully situated and with extensive grounds." But ere long

Miss Robins's health broke down and she became quite violently insane, so that she was obliged to go to a neighboring asylum. This left Mrs. Clemm in the home with Miss Robins's widowed mother, another sister, and a married son whose wife had eloped with her husband's best friend and left him with one small boy. "Oh dear what a wicked world this is," exclaims Mrs. Clemm, who had certainly seen her share of trouble. "The sin and sorrow I have witnessed in the last few years, and now this terrible desolating war, often makes me desirous to leave it and go to that sweet home where there will be no sorrow. I hope you will send me the photograph when convenient." Mrs. Clemm thanks her correspondent for her last enclosure.

Early in the spring of 1862 she says: "I have passed a very dreary and lonely winter. Poor Sallie (Robins) is still in the asylum, and I fear with little hope of a permanent recovery. Mrs. Robins has been confined to her room all winter with, I think, disease of the lungs. Her youngest daughter has been in Kentucky for a very long time. So you may suppose it has not been very pleasant for me. How I wish I could get a home in some pleasant family, where my services would be an equivalent for my board. I want little else. I sew neatly and quickly. I would in such a situation feel so much more independent. I have nothing to employ

my time here. I have no claim on Mrs. Robins and often feel as an intruder. Do you know of anyone who would give me a home on those terms? In my last letter I requested you to send me your photograph, as you promised me, and a copy of 'E. A. Poe and His Critics.' I loaned mine in Alexandria, and left there in such haste I could not get it again. . . . Will you please write me as soon as you receive this."

A long letter from the poor old lady written shortly before her entrance into the Church Home, where she spent her last days, probably contains Mrs. Clemm's last request for financial aid, though it is very certain that up to the time of the latter's death Mrs. Whitman continued to show her the same substantial interest.

This letter is dated Baltimore, June 16, 1863, and opens with a recital of the uncomfortable condition at Putnam which had become so insupportable that Mrs. Clemm in despair had written to her old rector, Doctor Wyatt, asking him to use his influence to secure her an admission to the Widow's Home in Baltimore. She says that all her Southern homes are closed to her on account of the war, and that Doctor Wyatt has placed her temporarily in the Church Home where she can remain for a few weeks, while she is endeavoring to raise the sum necessary for admission. If she can obtain one hundred and fifty dollars she can be taken care of

for the rest of her life in this haven of refuge, which is associated with her beloved Eddie.

She writes:

"The Episcopal Church will aid me in getting the requisite sum. If I do not succeed in obtaining it I know not what will become of me. But my faith in God is still firm. I think He will put into the hearts of some good Christian (preferably Mrs. Whitman) to aid me. If I get there I will never need farther help. . . . I suppose you have heard the literati of this place has a monument in prospect of my darling Eddie. I have seen a copy of the design, which is very beautiful. I always hoped this would be done but I could not hope to live to see it accomplished. The gentlemen of the committee tell me it will be finished this next fall. I am now in house where my beloved Eddie breathed his last, and I think it one of my greatest privileges that I can go unto the room where he died and pour out my earnest prayers to God and ask Him to continue His protection to me. The sisters are very kind and treat me with great attention. Dr. Wyatt recommended me particularly to their kindness. I am so much happier than I ever hoped to be again. . . . Will you not my dear friend, for the sake of him who loved you so truly, reply to this, and tell me why you have not written to me for so long a time. Direct to me, 'Church Home, Broadway, Baltimore, Md.'"

There is no record remaining to show how much of the necessary one hundred and fifty dollars was furnished by Mrs. Whitman, but it is likely that she contributed all that she could spare from her slender allowance in order to comply with this final request from the persistent correspondent whom she had never seen but to whom she had proved so sincere a friend.

When asked by a correspondent for her opinion of Mrs. Clemm, Mrs. Whitman replied:

"You ask what I think of Mrs. Clemm. I have never seen her. The three notes or letters of hers which I sent you are fair specimens of her correspondence and through these letters alone I know her. Mrs. Osgood told me that she had been a thorn in Poe's side—always embroiling him in difficulties, etc. Mr. Wyatt thought that she was very impulsive and indiscreet and exasperating,—Poe always spoke of her with grateful and affectionate consideration. I believe that she loved him devotedly."

CHAPTER XI

MRS. WHITMAN'S LETTERS.

THE letters which follow were written by Mrs. Whitman to her friend, Mrs. Freeman, between the years 1857 and 1860. During this period Mrs. Whitman's little volume, "Edgar Poe and His Critics," was published and made considerable stir in the literary world as the first work issued in Poe's defense.

In the summer of 1857 Mrs. Whitman made a trip to Europe at the invitation of her friend, Horace H. Day, with whose party she travelled, and who on various other occasions arranged delightful trips for her to the coast of Maine.

Mrs. Freeman, who was one of Mrs. Whitman's most devoted friends, was also a poet and a frequent contributor to the periodicals of her time, writing under the signature of "Mary Forrest." Like Mrs. Whitman, she was associated with the circle which included Emerson, Alcott, Alice and Phœbe Cary, and many others of that literary group of which her Providence friend writes her in March, 1857:

March, 1857.

My Dear Mrs. Freeman

I was very glad to receive your charming letter which tells me so many pleasant things.

I am glad that you have been passing a happy winter and that you have listened to the Orphic sayings of the eloquent Concord seer and sage. I love and reverence him, and would gladly have sat beside you in the pleasant parlor of Alice Cary and been refreshed as I have so often been of old, in his gracious presence. Curtis, in an article on Emerson, in the "Homes of the Poets," introduces Alcott as "Plato Skimpole," but he has very little of the "Skimpole" about him, and Emerson, with whom I lately spent a delightful evening, says for this wickedness he must have a reckoning with Curtis. I have heard Emerson say, heretofore, that *intellectually* he owed more to Alcott than to any other man.

Do you know Emerson personally? If not, I wish that you may do so.

It is like the memory of a cool, starry night, to have heard him talk. The lights have little warmth and are scattered far and wide over space, but their rays penetrate everywhere and suggest a mighty system which they do not reveal. He is so wise, so clear-sighted, so unique, so gentle, so beautifully cool and clear. Yet withal (I am fain to confess) a little too nicely balanced and self-conservative to win your whole heart. Thus, he said of a gloriously endowed friend of mine, who holds herself aloof from all society because people offend her sense of beauty or equity,—"Why not indulge

her fastidiousness by abstaining from what does not satisfy and sustain the soul? What else remains for her but to abstain?"

"The most beautiful of all things remains for us," I said, "to transform, to redeem that which is unlovely into that which is lovely by the power of faith and love."

I have made some successful experiments in this way and devoutly believe that serpents may be reclaimed. This is only effected by patience and prayer—but the results are wonderful.

Yesterday Mr. Prentice of Louisville was here and spoke much of Eva* and of "Mary Forrest." Her words on Love—"Not who love us, but whom we love are ours," have the fragrance of spring flowers, and the essence of all wisdom.

I have sent a dozen times for the *U. S. Magazine* since I read your letter, but it has not come. Meantime, Eva has sent me the proof-sheets of two articles which I have read with deep interest. There are some very pertinent things in her critique on M. Gasperard. In what she says on Faith and will, lies the key to all power and the sceptre of all sovereignty on earth and in heaven. I do not altogether believe, as she says, that when the apostles uttered their inspirations they were always to the outward eye, "sober, decorous, majestic"

*Eva was Mrs. Elizabeth Oakes Smith.

because as she will remember it was sometimes said of them that they were like people "filled with new wine." I think she must concede *so* much, in justification of our modern prophets and my poet of the Starry Heavens. . . .

Remember me affectionately to Eva and to the Carys and recollect that it gives me joy to receive your letters.

SARAH H. WHITMAN.

The correspondence with Mrs. Freeman is interrupted by Mrs. Whitman's trip to Europe, during which time she wrote a series of interesting letters to the Providence *Journal* describing her experiences and impressions of famous persons.

Her visit to Walter Savage Landor, whom she has pictured most delightfully in one of her letters to the *Journal*, is well worth including with her communications of this date.

BATH, June 20, 1857.

We left London on the nineteenth in the express train for Bath, travelling more than a hundred miles in two hours and a half, without inconvenience or fatigue. The road is the best and the safest in England and the cars more luxurious than a private carriage.

The stately, sleepy old town lies softly cradled within an amphitheatre of lofty hills; its noble crescents and beautiful villas, all

trellised and tapestried with flowers; its old walls and towers and terraces folded and curtained in heavy draperies of ivy, and steeped in the soft vapors of the "aquæ solis," the old Roman name for its healing waters—"waters of the sun." As we rode through some of its terraced streets last evening, we did not wonder at its reputation as the most picturesque inland city of Europe. It looked magically beautiful by the soft, rosy twilight that at this season in England lingers far into the night.

Bath is still the favorite resort of invalids, idlers and aristocrats, of all who would enjoy the *dolce far niente* in the midst of a perfumed and dreamy atmosphere.

Here were passed the last years of William Beckford, the eccentric author of "Vathek," and the luxurious proprietor of Fonthill Abbey. It was here that he sought to realize the last dreams of his marvellous fancy. It seems to have been his costly and mournful ambition to erect for himself a gorgeous "palace of art," in which he might live and die alone; but an eternal unrest consumed him, and one after another of his rare creations were, like his paradise at Cintra (made memorable in Byron's beautiful description), abandoned to desolation and decay. That most grand and terrible conception of retribution and despair, "The Hall of Eblis" might well have emanated from such a brain. Mr. Beckford was undoubtedly

what would be called in our day "a medium"—the victim perhaps of some haunting, demoniac possession. His "Vathek" was written in French, at a single sitting of three nights and two days, and without intervening sleep or rest. May not his rare intellectual tastes, his lavish expenditure in architectural creation, and his solitary and restless life have suggested to Tennyson his wonderful "Palace of Art," and to Edgar Poe that strange and sumptuous fantasy, "The Domain of Arnheim," one of his most cherished and favorite conceptions?

Yesterday we accepted an invitation to take tea with Walter Savage Landor at his house in River street. Hardly less of a recluse than the author of "Vathek," Mr. Landor ignores general society, professes not to know a dozen people in England, and politely expresses his enjoyment in the society of "foreigners." Mr. Emerson in his "English Traits," speaks of Landor as one of the three or four persons whom he wished to see in visiting Europe. He still lives, as in Italy, among a "cloud of pictures." His rooms are hung from basement to attic with rare paintings by the best French, English, and Italian masters. Dutch pictures he does not like, and has carefully weeded them from his walls. He holds to the only orthodox creed in art, that beauty should be its sole and devout aim. Among his pictures was a beautiful portrait of the mother of Sheridan, by

Romney. It was full of riant, sparkling life, and showed the clear bright fountain from which sprang the vivacious wit of the brilliant orator and conversationalist. A picture of Europa, by Correggio, pleased me more than all the rest. With one hand she had grasped a horn of the stately animal she rode, while the other filled with roses, was pressed tenderly against her cheek. There was a strange ideal charm in her innocent playfulness and in the aerial lightness with which she seemed borne along through a solemn, mysterious atmosphere, whose lurid gloom beautifully relieved her soft pearly cheek and fluttering milk-white robes. I can never forget this picture. I afterwards found it was a great favorite with Mr. Landor, who said he would rather part with every picture in his collection than with this.

His conversation surprises by its freshness and novelty, and stimulates by its resistance. With all his fine taste and culture, he is too arbitrary in his opinions and too eccentric in his tastes to be a safe guide to others; but it is pleasant to talk with a man who has faith in his own fancies. His manners are a singular compound of noble courtesy and abrupt, uncompromising protest and assertion. He said, "You have great writers in your country," and spoke in high praise of Emerson, recalling with evident pleasure their personal interviews in Italy many years ago. He objected to his

style, as to that of many of the ablest English writers of the last half century; insisting on a classic directness and transparency of diction as one of the cardinal virtues.

Among others, he instanced Sidney Smith and Washington Irving as examples of faultless style. But to assert that the colossal and shadowy dreams the intricate and labyrinthian fancies of De Quincey could be adequately expressed in a style that is adapted to the racy humor and practical common sense of Sidney Smith, or to insist that the scope, the subtlety, the insight, the remote and star-like beauty of Emerson's thought can be told in the sweet familiar phrase of Irving, is simply to ask that which is, in the very nature of things, impossible. As well require that the bulbul and the nightingale should sing like the robin and the lark, or that the night-blooming cereus should yield the perfume of the day-lily and the violet. He praised with much emphasis, the writings of Miss Lynn—"Aminone," "Azette, the Egyptian," and some others. He said they combined some of the finer attributes of Rousseau's genius, with the intellectual freedom of De Staël. I believe these works are just being published in America. He professed not to have heard of the author of "Christie Johnstone," whose last novel has so stirred the sympathies of all American readers. With the exception of Howitt's last work, which has just been sent

him by the author, I saw no books in his apartments.

He is said to give away his books as soon as he has read them; a most princely and gracious habit. Beautiful flowers were on the table, and bloomed in beds of earth on the broad stone ledges of the windows, an almost universal custom in Bath. He gave us moss roses and musk plants at parting, and we left him with pleasant memories of the hours passed in his society. He invited us to return on the morrow and see his pictures by the morning light. But today we went with a party of friends to Clifton, and tomorrow we leave Bath, with its grand old Abbey,—"the lantern of England," —its Temple of Minerva, its Roman ruins and its mediæval relics, for "sunny France."

In after years in referring to Poe as a conversationalist, Mrs. Whitman declared that she had heard Walter Savage Landor, who was pronounced the best talker in England; had listened to George William Curtis talk of the gardens of Damascus till the air seemed purpled and perfumed with its roses; had heard the autocrat's trenchant and vivid talk, and the racy remarks of Doctor Orestes A. Brownson; had listened to John Neal and Margaret Fuller, and to the serene wisdom of Alcott; but unlike the conversational power of any of these was the "earnest, opulent, unpremeditated

speech of Poe. The charm of his conversation was its genuineness, its wonderful directness and sincerity, and what added to the charm of his presence in society was his simple, natural, unconventional courtesy, and the perfectly sincere grace of his manner."

On her return from abroad, Mrs. Whitman resumed her usual life in Providence, where the demands made upon her by her mother and sister were so exacting that she seldom felt she could be spared from home.

She writes to Mrs. Freeman in September, 1857, of Charlotte Cushman and her dramatic successes:

"I thank you for your kind sweet letter and for your promise to send Madame La Vert's vol. which I shall be glad to see.

"How sorry I am for Eva's loss. For Appleton it must be a profounder sorrow than any words can speak. His kind and beautiful eyes will be clouded I fear by a heavier shadow than has ever yet fallen upon them. I shall look with interest for the poem, of which you speak, about the little boy.

"People wear very long faces here and talk only of 'the times.'

"The failure of the Harpers greatly surprised me.

"Did you see Charlotte Cushman and do you like her?

"I have seen her in Lady Macbeth,—by the

way, did you ever think how strange it is that lady Macbeth has no name—no distinctive name? Like the witches—she is only the fourth witch.

"I doubt if the character has ever been played faithfully since Mrs. Siddons gave her great soul to it. I did not like Charlotte Cushman's Lady Macbeth but I like her Meg Merrilies.

"That is I think it horribly true. I passed an evening last week with Miss Davenport, who tells me it is her great ambition to play Lady Macbeth. She has succeeded wonderfully in Medea and will, I think, improve greatly in the coming year. Do you know her? She is very talented. I do not know if she has genius but I think so.

"If you go to Mobile you must write me when you get there. I have been writing a letter for the *Journal* about our Autumnal woods which I will send you when it is published.

"I have just been reading Bayne's critical Essays which I like very much. Read it if you can and tell me how you like his estimate of Mrs. Browning.

"If Alice Cary comes back and you see her give her kindest remembrances from me. It is now just a year since you and I sat together in her pleasant parlor under the picture of Fanny Osgood, while opposite to us hung the por-

traits of two persons strangely associated in my soul's history with her, and with another of whom I will not speak.

"Griswold was living then—now he is with them in 'Shadowland.' How strange it seems to me."

In a letter written toward the end of the year 1857 Mrs. Whitman refers to her dislike of Thackeray, in regard to whose merits she had carried on many lively discussions with George William Curtis who failed to agree with her views.

"I thank you for the kind little note. I have not yet seen your article on Modern Criticism, which I hope to find on the Athenæum table tomorrow and, like Eva's self, to pronounce 'capital.' . . .

" 'Surely' I 'have *not* read Griswold's will in the papers.' Can't you tell me something definite about it? or send me a paper. Did he leave Alice Cary his portrait—and what became of the other portraits, Mrs. Osgood's and Edgar Poe's? . . .

"I am glad you like my autumn scenery. Your praise always gratifies me. It is for such that I love to write. Mr. Giles has been here lecturing on Charlotte Brontë, but I think he said nothing half so good as Eva has said on that great theme. If little Charlotte had known when she first began to 'make out' that her name would be a theme for lecturers,—as that

of Shakespeare, or Milton, or Dante, how it would have amazed her.

"Do you remember what she said of Thackeray, that notwithstanding her admiration for him his presence always made her feel ineffably stupid. I can understand this. I hope you do not like Thackeray, for I feel so utterly antagonistic to him that I would rather a friend of mine should like the most reckless yellow-covered novelist in authordom than to admire his prosaic, ignoble, passionless books. I have just been reading them at the request of one of his admirers and so speak feelingly. Dante has somewhere a line which I quote from memory, and which expresses exactly what I felt in reading him. 'Shuddering I went through those frore shallows, the memory whereof still chills me.'"

In a letter dated early in 1859 Mrs. Whitman refers to the "Phalanstery," a literary club in Providence, to which she belonged. Its members amused themselves by writing humorous epitaphs addressed to one another, which were read at the meetings with much merriment. Numerous clever contributions were furnished by Mrs. Whitman, who was herself supplied by various friends with a greater variety of epitaphs than are often vouchsafed to any mortal.

Mrs. Whitman thanks Mrs. Freeman for her epitaph entitled "Proserpine," a name which

is henceforth bestowed upon the subject by numerous friends.

"Thanks for the 'Proserpine.' It was read to an admiring audience at the Phalanstery and pronounced a very finely-drawn and faithful outline, allowing, of course, for its pleasant flatteries.

"A series of humorous epitaphs on the ladies of the Phalanstery were read last night at Governor Anthony's in which they adopted for me your name of Proserpine. The Governor is to have a number of copies printed for us. I will send you one. They were written by Miss Jacobs, the lady who sent the Birthnight flowers. She told me last evening that she was intending to write on one of the flower-leaves 'Asphodels,' but sending them away in a hurry neglected to do so. Was it not a strange coincidence with my lines about them?"

Miss Sarah S. Jacobs's poem on "St. Helena," if not remarkable for its poetic quality is yet worthy of preservation as an admirable summary of Mrs. Whitman's pet foibles, and presents an amusing example of these epitaphs, some of which may well rival those belonging to the inhabitants of "Spoon River."

Our Poet's dead, dead as old Grimes,
Whom we shall see no more,
She wrote the Carrier's address,
But she was dead before;

And from the post mortem verses that came back to us
then
It would not appear that the *fit* poet *nascitur* over again.

No evil anywhere she saw
With her fan shielded eyes,
E'en mediums her friendship shared,
She was of medium size;
Dr. Johnson wouldn't have liked her, for she was not good
at hating,
And indeed her toleration was something past tolerating.

How oft her voice in memory's ear
Its rills of music pours,
She wore a bonnet in the house
And thin shoes out of doors;
Faster than seven-league boots they carried her off, those
luckless thin shoes,
What boots it now to meditate on such a careless muse.

Then wipe away those flowing tears
And let this thought console;
The gentle martyr died to save
An India-rubber sole
It is all leather and prunella to make such a fuss about
her,
If we only could think so, we do just as well without her.

Her creed in short was to believe
Whatever she ought not to,
A table rampant was her crest,
Excelsior, her motto;
Her acquaintance was extensive in every far and every
nigh-land
Throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, America, Hades and
Rhode Island.

Of Speculations she was fond
Whose depths the soul appall,
A beaming smile she always wore;
She often wore a shawl;
The reason for her great partiality for shawls was perhaps
Because she found no other so serviceable *wraps*.

Farewell the graceful tongue and pen,
The charm of all the town,
We know she will not lay it up
That we have laid her down.
She is no better off, that we can see for going thus away
She already had what's promised there, one everlasting day.*

Mrs. Whitman writes of Mrs. Freeman's recent poem, entitled "Dead," and at the same time refers to James Wood Davidson, who was a close friend with whom she carried on an extensive correspondence in regard to Poe. He also was desirous of bringing out a life of the poet, and in the summer of 1858, when she was suffering more than usual from the chronic heart trouble which she was convinced was soon to end her life, Mrs. Whitman intrusted to Davidson the Poe love-letters in order that he might be able to give to the public after her death a more true and just account of her association with Poe. She, moreover, planned at one time to collaborate with him.

"Mr. Davidson sent me last week a notice of the first number of the *Great Republic* in

* A reference to her friend, Mr. Day.

which he speaks of 'Dead' as 'a poem written in the wild and unearthly vein of Edgar Poe—as fine a thing of the kind as we have seen in many a day.'

"I thank you dearest for all your sweet words and sanitary counsels. All will be *well.* I have had an examination of my heart this week and although the result is not what your kind heart would interpret as 'favorable,' yet believe me that all will happen for the best. . . .

"Emerson has been here during the past week, and again I passed some delightful hours with him after the lecture. I think I never saw him so genial and pleasant as now. Did you see the report of a fine speech he made at the Burns Festival in Boston? It was the best of the evening. He says Alcott has been enjoying a paradisal season at St. Louis. Holding parle with large and loving audiences.

"Have you read 'Thorndale'? Bishop Clarke told me last evening at the Phalanx that it was a book I should specially like. So I take it for granted that you will like it, too. Bishop Clarke is the most large-hearted liberal man in the Church, preaching spiritualism as openly as a man in lawn may dare to do. He has had great experiences in the presence of Hume—staying with him for days together at the home of the Cheney's in Manchester.

"You ask if 'Lenore' had reference to me. It was written years before I knew Poe. But I

have something strange to tell about it. On the very evening when I received your letter proposing this question, I received from Davidson the January number of *Russell's Magazine*, in which are copies of this poem to Lenore as originally printed in the *Southern Literary Messenger*. The one beginning:

> Ah, broken is the golden bowl—
> The spirit flown forever—
> Let the bell toll! A saintly soul
> Floats on the Stygian river

"In the earlier versions of this poem, quoted by Russell, the verses are addressed not to Lenore but to Helen, from which Lenore is, as Poe once told me, in some sense, a derivation.

"You will see—

> Helen, Ellen, Ellenore, Lenore.

"Poe liked to trace these subtle relations in words and things. . . .

"The name of Power was originally spelled Poer or De la Poer. It is a Norman name and, in historical references to the Anglo Normans of that name who invaded Ireland with Strongbow, is most frequently spelled that way. Now write my paternal name according to this earlier and more correct orthography.

S a r a h H e l e n P o e r —

"Then transpose the letters in the order in which I shall number them—

S a r a h H e l e n P o e r

3 6 5 1 2 8 4 9 10 11 7 12 14 13

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

A h S e r a p h L e n o r e

"I confess that when I saw the result I felt a strange sense of what Macbeth would call 'Fate and metaphysical aid.'"

Toward the end of this letter Mrs. Whitman speaks of her friend, Mrs. Ritchie, who, with Davidson, is aiding her in piecing together the true facts about Poe's life in Richmond. She says:

"Davidson is deeply interested in everything relating to Poe's character and history and had made (without success) great efforts to ascertain the facts in this particular matter.* You may judge then how valuable to me is the information derived through Mrs. Ritchie.

"It relieves me from a perplexity on this matter which I did not know how to solve. Mrs. Ritchie's story agrees with that which Poe himself told me in regard to this lady, with certain qualifications which I will tell you some time. But when I was in New York last spring Mrs. Stevens told me that it was to Miss White

*Poe's association with Mrs. Shelton.

that Poe was engaged, with other particulars that served to complicate the story and, as I said, greatly to perplex me. Now I know that what Poe told me was true, at least so far as related to the incidents of the engagement or proposal of marriage, if not as to the feelings and motives that prompted it.

"Four or five months after our final parting Poe went again to Richmond and renewed his acquaintance with Mrs. Shelton with what degree of encouragement, on her part, I know only that which Mrs. Ritchie has imparted. Her account corresponds with his own statement to me, and exonerates him from the charge of duplicity which attached to the relation made by Mrs. Stevens. How grateful I am to you for having interested yourself in this matter and given me a statement of facts which have freed me from all doubt and perplexity in relation to the whole affair. I leave the subject for the present, but we shall speak of it again I trust and I shall tell you many things which I would have you know. . . .

"I see by the paper today that the February number of the *Great Republic* is out. Shall I find you there?

"I enclose an account of Mrs. Ritchie's wedding which you may, or may not have seen. I send you too a puff about Fanny Fern, written three or four years ago, as a specimen of the puff extraordinary.

"Last night was my birthnight—and on returning from an evening with the spiritualists I found my table covered with the most beautiful delicate little flowers that I ever looked on. Most of them were quite new to me. I send some lines I wrote this morning to the kind friend who sent them.

I do not heed the sands that pass
So swiftly through Time's slender glass,
As up the golden stairs I go
That lead me where the amaranths grow,
That lead me where the palm-trees blow.

I do not heed the pulse of Time
Knelled from the steeple's solemn chime,
I only count its rhythm's beat
In measures musical and sweet
When at mid-winter's merry tide
These birthnight flowers open wide
Sweet eyes of wonder, and foretell
The deathless meads of asphodel
That wait my coming—then I know
How near to me the amaranths grow,
How near the palm-trees bud and blow.

S. H. W."

On February 27, 1859, Mrs. Whitman writes to Mrs. Freeman from Washington:

"I received your little note dearest Mary this morning sent me from Providence. . . .

I have seen a great number of Lions and some very pleasant people. Have been during the past week to Secretary Thompson's recep-

tion, to the President's last Levee, to three Readings of Fanny Kemble (whom I have also met in private and for the first time become acquainted with) and have attended Signora Mario's Lecture in behalf of the Italians.

Of the Signora I have seen a great deal. She is an intimate friend of Mrs. Browning and today gave me a few shining threads of her hair and of "Robert's" as she calls the author of "Paracelsus," which Signor Mario thinks his most remarkable poem.

I send you a single hair of each in the little envelope; the longer of the two is hers. Perhaps you will write a poem about it. . . .

I have written a letter for the Providence *Journal* about the last Levee "Mrs. Kemble" etc. which you shall see when it is published. I have not yet solved the destiny that lies hidden in your name although I have laid awake for hours trying to find it. Strange things happen here at Washington. A Californian who occupied the parlors over ours committed suicide a few nights ago under circumstances of great strangeness and horror and today at the dinner table I heard that Daniel Sickles had just shot a gentleman of this city whose attentions to his wife he resented and avenged by murder.

About the Richmond lady, Mr. Davidson (in reply to a letter on the subject to a friend in Richmond, The Rev. James D. McCabe) learns

that Mr. Poe was said to have been engaged at the time of his death to a daughter of James H. Royster (this was Mrs. Shelton). . . .

Good bye dearest for the present
Your own
S. H. W.

At this time Mrs. Whitman was still uncertain about the facts connected with Poe's last days in Richmond and his association with Mrs. Shelton.

A month later she writes:

"I miss the beautiful climate of Washington, the budding trees and the soft April skies, but they will soon be here, the willows of St. John's churchyard already begin to look golden in the sunlight. My life in Washington seems like a dream to me, especially my seeing poor Key with Mrs. Sickles among the guests of the crowded ball-room at the reception of one of the ministers the week before his death. . . .

"We had our Mt. Vernon festival this week and made about a thousand dollars. I did not go to it but sent to their antiquarian museum a dress of gold-colored brocade which danced with La Fayette at a ball in Newport three or four score years ago."

Writing again a few months later she voices her ever-tolerant attitude toward those with whom she comes in contact.

"How could you think dear Mary that I should look on your kind reception of E—— as a weakness? You know I believe in receiving all who come to us, in opening if not 'wide arms' at least willing hearts to all seeking souls, whether saints or sinners. This seems to me conscious strength dearest and not 'weakness.' I am very glad that you have met so confidentially. If we veil our spirits from all but the noble and the faithful we shall lose many chances of making others happier and better."

On October 12, 1859, Mrs. Whitman writes to this friend in regard to the defense of Poe which she has finally completed:

"I do not know whether I shall go to New York this fall. I think not, for Rudd and Carleton have written to me that they can send the proof of my book (which they are just beginning to print) to Providence if I desire it.

"I want to consult you about something in relation to it but have not time now. I have read 'Beulah' and like it very much. Miss Evans has imagination and makes vivid pictures and incidents. I think she will do something very fine by and bye. But the philosophical tone she assumes is a little too ambitious for her present culture I think. But it indicates reading and thought remarkable in so young a person. How finely she conceives the spirit of Poe's fictions. I want to know something of her."

A month later she writes to Mrs. Freeman:

"The little book will be ready early in December I think.

"If you have a chance to say a kind word for it I shall be glad. . . .

"I want some appropriate quotations for the interleaf between the title and preface. Can you think of any? I wrote a preface the other day at the suggestion of Curtis which I think indicates very well the character of the work. I will copy it for you:

" 'Dr. Griswold's Memoir of Edgar Poe has been extensively read and circulated; its perverted facts and baseless assumptions have been adopted into every subsequent Memoir and notice of the poet's life and have been translated into many languages. For ten years this great wrong to the dead has passed unchallenged and unrebuked.

" 'It has been assumed by a recent English critic that "Edgar Poe had no friends." As an index to a more equitable and intelligent theory of the idiosyncrasies of his life, these pages are submitted to his more candid critics and readers by *one of his friends*.' "

On February 19, 1860, Mrs. Whitman writes in regard to her book which has been out for about a fortnight:

"Your kind sweet letter and all your pleasant words about my book were very grateful to me. I can hardly believe a week has passed since it came. The days have been so crowded!

"Grace Greenwood lectured here last night and just as I was sitting down to write to you I was induced to go and hear her. The lecture, read by another, would I think have pleased me. But she cannot read. I never heard a voice so defective. It was painful to hear her. Our largest hall was filled to suffocation. No woman had lectured before the Lyceum till now and the curiosity to see Grace Greenwood, or to hear a woman speak, brought together an immense audience. . . .

"I had a letter from Mrs. Clemm last night expressing great satisfaction in the little book, a copy of which Rudd and Carleton sent her at my request. She expressed the sincerest gratitude and said she knew it would 'make Edgar's spirit happier.' I am glad that she accepts it in this way. I thought some of my admissions might pain her.

"I am glad to have you know Aldrich. Tell me how you like him and if you have read his poem published by Rudd and Carleton. A Sultan's daughter secretly loves the husband whom for reasons of state she is forbidden to see after the ceremonial marriage. I forget the title. It is like one of the jewelled windows in Aladdin's Palace. I read it through this morning while waiting in Grand street for Mr. Carleton. . . .

"I have just finished the 'Amber Gods.' It is as gorgeous and strange as the 'dead butterfly' borne on a salt sea-wind from 'the grey loneliness beyond.' I shall read all she writes.

"'How to Grow' somebody sent me a copy through the post. On this question I cannot dogmatize—I mean the question of marriage. I am quite willing that any wife or all wives should pass in at the golden door of Paradise 'through voluntary and entire subjection of the will of the wife to the husband.' I am for the largest liberty on this question, and think that much may be said for the immolation of widows on the funeral piles of their husbands. Yet I do not blame those who abstain or run away. I am rather disposed to engrave on my banner the evangelical war-word 'Break every bond!'"

A couple of months later Mrs. Whitman writes that George William Curtis has written her for suggestions in regard to the publication in book form of "Trumps," wishing her to be "very candid in her criticism," and she is therefore rereading the numbers which have already appeared serially for the purpose of giving the author the criticism asked for.

Toward the end of May she writes to Mrs. Freeman of their mutual literary interests, and of the new book, "Harrington," which her friend, William Douglas O'Connor, editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*, is engaged upon. O'Connor was a great admirer of Walt Whitman, in vindication of whom he published in 1866 a pamphlet, entitled "The Good Gray Poet." He was also a defender of Delia Bacon's theory concerning the authorship of Shakespeare's plays, being himself an active Baconian.

"Did I tell you that your 'Lullaby' was republished in the Philadelphia *Saturday Evening Post.* It seems to take all hearts.

"O'Connor writes me that he is at work on his story which he has engaged to complete before September for a large remuneration. It is to be published in Boston. His account of his despairing and demagnetized state, after he had engaged to do it, was very funny. I had written that I hoped the angel had touched his lips with a live coal from off the altar. He writes that 'he has not,' but 'that the Devil has put him on a particularly hot gridiron. Sitting on which he has written 321 pages of MS and expects to write the remaining 600 before October.' I fancied you might faintly appreciate his position. It is ridiculous (his antithesis) but very funny. He has just met Walt Whitman in Boston. He says there are incomparable things in the new edition. I have not read it, though the publishers have sent me an advance copy. He says 'the great Walt is very grand and it is health and happiness to be near him; he is so large and strong—so pure, proud and tender, with such an ineffable bon-hommie and wholesome sweetness of presence; all the young men and women are in love with him.' O tempora, O mores! but this is passing strange, is it not? 'Strange if true' as the newspapers say.

"Dr. Channing and Jeannie have returned from Cuba and are with the O'Connors. 'Trumps' is rapidly going to press. I hear

through Mr. Wheaton that my little book is in great demand in that region, Mobile, and more copies are much needed. In Illinois too, it has devoted admirers. John Hay (a poet-graduate of Brown University) writes me that it lay on the table of Gov. Bissell when he died, with some rare German books,—lay nearest his hand—and was filled with marks and marginal notes. O'Connor says I must read his book before it comes out. How can I? I shall have to keep a private secretary and a private critic etc.—Yesterday I had to write an obituary on a Providence artist (!) to-day a puff for Leaves of Grass (!!!) the day before yesterday a poem for a young lady's album (I enclose you a printed copy) and tomorrow six letters to the south and west, to people I have never seen. I admire Mrs. Stoddard's 'Own Story' for its vividness and strength. Her sphere is, or seems, very limited but very unique and marked.

"Nora (Perry) is writing an exquisite poem about a garden of lilies in a sultry August night. Inspired I think by your splendid 'Dead Sea,' not copied or stolen or even imitated from it—simply suggested and inspired by it."

In another communication Mrs. Whitman tells of some photographs* which she has had

*These photographs and various others were taken by Mrs. Whitman's friend Mr. William Coleman, the photographer, to whom she subsequently gave her daguerreotype of Poe.

MRS. WHITMAN AS "PALLAS"

From a photograph by Coleman, hitherto unpublished

taken in costume; her suggestion that the two sides of her face express different characteristics is of special interest as recalling the fact that the same was true of Poe, whose pictures show an extraordinary difference in this respect.

"Thinking that fine feathers make fine birds I have costumed two of my photographs, which in some of the pictures gives character and is an acknowledged improvement. There is something curious about these pictures. Two represent the left side of the face and two the right side. Those of the left are both decidedly masculine, the other two as decidedly feminine. Now modern physiologists tell us that the brain is dual and the left side positive."

In a subsequent letter she speaks of Whittier.

"I met Whittier yesterday and had a talk with him about the glory that is to be revealed. You may judge how pleasant it was to meet the poet of freedom just at this epoch. I had never seen him before though he was at one time engaged to one of my dearest friends, Ida Russell. She was a beautiful, splendid creature but lymphatic and impeded by worldly cares and solicitudes and ambitions. His Quaker simplicity and her bumptious tastes did not readily harmonize and so they grew to be strangers."

During the dark days of the Civil War Mrs. Whitman's pen cheered and comforted many of her friends who were upon the field of ac-

tion, and several of her soldier correspondents bore with them through the struggle some little talisman which she had given them "for luck" at parting; she was herself devotedly attached to little tokens of varying value and artistic merit with which she was always surrounded; for the sake of the giver or of the precious memory connected with the gift she often placed upon her walls or in her living-room articles possessed of little virtue, and pictures, prints, and sketches which caused the casual visitor, who knew not why she loved them, to wonder at the owner's eccentricity of taste.

Among her published war lyrics was one written just after the fight at Manassas, which in its suggestion of the sad bells tolling for Rhode Island's dead might seem like a distant response to Poe's funeral bells.

At the time that these verses appeared their author sent a copy to her friend, Mrs. Freeman, with the words: "I send you my *Miserere* after the fight three weeks ago yesterday.

"Lyman Lancing Vaughn was in the dreadful Battery of our second regiment that killed so many rebels. . . . My friend Col. Slocum was killed that dreadful Sunday.

"The pressure of his hand still seems warm in my own, and the bright living smile with which he reminded me of a talisman which I gave him when he went to fight our Mexican

battles and which he wore, passing unscathed through the thickest of the fight. That smile is ever before me."

A letter hurriedly scrawled after the battle of Bull Run by G. L. Dwight brings the message:

"In haste dear Helena. All right, a hard fight, and got licked. Will tell you more in the future. Your horse-shoe carried me through. 'Fill up your beaker to the brim.' . . .

"Don't wait for me to write. I can't always answer. Write without waiting for it. Long letters I *long* for. Noyes here. H—— was at Alexandria and not in the fight. Under orders Ballooning and watching the enemy."

In a note to Mrs. Freeman written at about this time Mrs. Whitman's words echo the excitement of the war when she exclaims:

"I have the affairs of the nation on my hands and heart and read the 'extras' all day without seeing things nearer crises than two months ago.

"I just heard a boy crying the twelve o'clock extra *Journal*, enriched, as it was delicately hinted, by the 'Death of the Rebel General.'

"Hoping it might be Beauregard I ran to the window to secure a copy. It proved to be Raines. I wonder if I am getting bloodthirsty."

Mrs. Whitman's verses written after "Manassas" were printed in the Providence *Journal*

in August, 1861. Three of the six stanzas follow:

By the great bells swinging slow
The solemn dirges of our woe,
By the heavy flags that fall
Trailing from the bastioned wall,
Miserere, Domine!

. . . . . .

By the sin we dared disown
Till its "dragon teeth" were sown,
By the cause, *yet* unavowed,
By the fire behind the cloud,
Miserere, Domine!

By our northern host betrayed,
At Manassas' bloody raid,
By our losses unatoned—
Our dead heroes, heart-enthroned,
Miserere, Domine!

CHAPTER XII

POE'S WOMEN FRIENDS

WHEN, after the completion of "Edgar Poe and His Critics," Mrs. Whitman laid down the pen with which she had paid tribute to her eccentric lover, she doubtless fancied that the task which she had set herself was at last finished. She had, however, reckoned without the host of would-be biographers, who were destined to seek her out and enlist her aid in the production of their various works.

After an intermission of almost two decades, in which the all-absorbing conflict between the North and South swept minor matters from the field, a second wave of interest in Poe arose, and half a dozen biographers entered the literary arena for the avowed purpose of doing justice to the poet's memory.

Each one in turn solicited from Mrs. Whitman the kind assistance which she had shown herself both capable of giving and willing to bestow; having already done much, she was rewarded by enlarged opportunities for doing more. From England came an earnest plea from John H. Ingram, whose earliest ambition had been to champion America's "neg-

lected genius"; while on this side, William F. Gill, Eugene L. Didier, and others, addressed enthusiastic communications to "Helen," the friend of Poe, who had already taken the literary stand in his defense. Even from France came a demand for Mrs. Whitman's sanction of the translations of Poe's poems being prepared by Stéphane Mallarmé.

Although she had now reached the age of seventy, Mrs. Whitman's youthful spirit did not shrink from the new task imposed upon her. She spent her strength ungrudgingly upon an exhaustive correspondence with Poe's biographers; she hunted data, delved into archives, wrote long and painstaking accounts of her association with Poe, loaned pictures, autographs, and books which were in her possession, and in the end, as a reward, found herself whirled about in a vortex of controversy and criticism. Most of the men who were determined to provide Poe with an authentic biography, like the majority of women who claimed they loved him, hated each other cordially, and exercised their eloquence in the direction of execrating their fellow craftsmen. And Mrs. Whitman, who had been friendly with them all, was the storm centre and the repository of their grievances and grudges; a truly wearing occupation for one who was past threescore years and ten, and who adored peace and tranquillity.

The opening of January, 1874, brought Mrs. Whitman Ingram's * first communication concerning Poe; this opened up a correspondence which extended over the next four years.

Previous to this, by a few months, had come letters from Gill asking for aid in the preparation of a lecture in which he proposed to exonerate Poe from charges which had been made against him by Griswold. This lecture was to be a forerunner of an extensive Life of Poe which he intended to produce.

To Gill's request, Mrs. Whitman had obligingly acceded, sending, to make clear certain points, letters and information such as she later contributed toward the work of Ingram. Before receiving Ingram's first letter a number of months had passed, during which period Gill had paid no attention to Mrs. Whitman's communications, so that she had been led to infer that he had relinquished his project.

After a brief acquaintance with these two men Mrs. Whitman became convinced that the Englishman's work was to prove by far the more reliable and adequate, and she therefore put her whole heart into responding to his continuous appeals.

Ingram's first letter opens with the words:

* Ingram's death in England, in February, 1916, followed the announcement of the completion of a final exhaustive work on Poe, which he had been for years engaged upon.

"I am sending this in the forlorn hope that it may reach you safely and induce you to kindly aid me in my efforts to clear the memory of my favorite author, Edgar Poe, from the cruel slanders of the late Dr. Griswold. For many years past I have been collecting material for a new life of the poet, but here in England, I work under great difficulties."

After describing his inability to secure the much-needed documents, he goes on to say:

"A little while ago I was delighted to see your work, 'Edgar Poe and His Critics,' in the Museum, as it strengthened and confirmed me in my desire to do my best in vindication of Poe." After expressing his hope that Mrs. Whitman will not refuse to assist him, he closes his letter with a long list of queries which he hopes she will answer.

From this time, until the close of their correspondence, he continues to send Mrs. Whitman long and finely penned epistles, covering from four to sixteen pages and mailed at frequent intervals, sometimes as often as semi-weekly.

In the course of this correspondence a close friendship sprang up between the young man and the elderly woman, who shared the same enthusiasm. Ingram had never been in America and was, in many instances, ignorant of facts and how to obtain them, until assisted by his American correspondent. Upon the other hand,

his research work had brought to light much that had hitherto failed to materialize, and so together they solved many problems, and when at last his work was finished, Ingram acknowledged his deep debt of gratitude to Poe's American champion, without whose able assistance he could hardly have carried to a successful finish his researches in this part of the world.

In return for the information furnished by Mrs. Whitman, Ingram sent many entertaining accounts of his acquaintance in London with Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. Houghton, Mrs. Gove-Nichols, and other women who had in their early days been associated with Poe.

It was a curious occurrence, suggestive of the last act of some comic opera, which brought to London, just at this period, so many of the actors who had participated in Poe's life drama, and showed them making their final speeches upon an English stage. This feminine coterie, as scrutinized by Ingram, something more than "twenty years after," presents a very edifying picture of human frailties and petty animosities. And the idealist breathes a sigh to think that lovely woman, who in her youth inspires immortal verse, may prove in later years to be unwieldy, unattractive, and commonplace, as well as an unscrupulous busybody, quite ready to exploit herself at the expense of one

whose brief attention has alone rescued her from oblivion.

In his desire to get into close touch with the surviving members of the Poe family in America, Ingram turned his attention to the investigation of the affairs of Miss Rosalie Poe, Edgar's one sister. Finding her to be quite poor and dependent, he was inspired with the idea of sending her a generous sum of money raised by the literary admirers of Poe in England. He speedily enlisted the sympathy of Tennyson, Rossetti, and also of Swinburne, who was an especial Poe enthusiast. From the latter he received a cordial response which he forwarded to Mrs. Whitman on March 11, 1874.

Swinburne's communication reads:

I am writing Mr. Morris and have commended the matter to him as one of Poe's truest admirers. With best wishes for your success and sincere congratulations on the good work you have already done for the long and grievously outraged memory of the first true and great genius of America,

Believe me,
Yours very truly
A. C. SWINBURNE.

This plan to render independent the fortune of Poe's only sister, whose lack of mental equipment made it impossible for her to be

thrown on her own resources, was never realized, for before its accomplishment, the death of Miss Poe was announced, on July 21, 1874, at the age of sixty-eight years; she had survived her brother by a quarter of a century, and the only respect in which she was said to have resembled him, was in the possession of an exquisite handwriting; this gift enabled her to teach penmanship in the Young Ladies' Seminary in Richmond, kept by her adopted mother, Mrs. McKenzie. Rosalie Poe lived in Richmond up to the last year of her life, when she was taken into the home of her cousin Nelson Poe, of Baltimore. Here her eccentricities made it impossible for her to remain for any length of time, and she was transferred to the Epiphany Church Home, in Washington, D. C., where, after a few months she breathed her last. On learning of her death, from Mrs. Whitman, Ingram expressed much sorrow at having failed to carry out his plan more promptly, and wrote for the *Mirror* an appreciative tribute to Miss Poe.

Ingram pictures to Mrs. Whitman his varied impressions of the feminine circle with which his researches have brought him in contact. Among these acquaintances Mrs. Gove-Nichols* figures prominently, as well as Mrs. Houghton

*Mrs. Nichols, who was a physician, was one of the first women to lecture on hygiene. For many years she conducted a successful water-cure in New York, and her theories in regard to diet, bathing, and fresh air, were in line with those to-day sanctioned by the medical profession.

(formerly Mrs. Shew), which two ladies fail to agree in their accounts of Poe and of his household.

Mrs. Nichols, formerly Mrs. Gove, was one of the friends who came to the assistance of the Poe family during Virginia's illness, and her stories of the dire want experienced by the Poe household, published in later years, were said to have been greatly exaggerated.

Ingram assured Mrs. Whitman that Mrs. Nichols's recollections of Virginia's deathbed appeared to be "fictitious" when contrasted with the accounts which he had from the letters of Poe and Mrs. Clemm, while Mrs. Houghton assured him that everything needed in Poe's family was amply provided by interested friends.

In summing up Mrs. Nichols's qualifications Poe had said of her: "She is a mesmerist, a Swedenborgian, a phrenologist and a disciple of Preissnitz, and what more I am not prepared to say." He might have added that she was another one of "The Literati" who hoped to cancel past indebtedness and acquire fame by furnishing the public with the history of his family.

Mrs. Whitman's English correspondent writes on January 27, 1875, that he has just seen Mrs. Nichols, who promises to aid him; she is old and nearly sightless, but exceedingly "positive."

"I'll fight any number of men, but I don't want an embroglio with any ladies," he asserts. "Mrs. Nichols promises to work systematically to help me, and will not leave a stone unturned to do so. She had (in compliance with an earnest desire from Mrs. Clemm) written 'Reminiscences of Poe' for a series of sketches in *The Leader*, and the article was, apparently the one reprinted in *Sixpenny*, but with alterations. . . . She insists that Miss E. Blackwell never boarded at Fordham, and that the home there was given up by Poe and his mother-in-law long before his death. Can you lighten the darkness?"

The query about Miss Blackwell recalls the fact that on this point a misunderstanding arose between Ingram and Mrs. Whitman, owing to a blunder made by the Englishman in mistaking the identity of the two sisters, Miss Anna and Miss Elizabeth. Mrs. Whitman's association was with Miss Anna, and her account of that lady, sent to Ingram, he tried to fit in with Miss Elizabeth's recollections, when he got into communication with that lady. She failed to verify what Mrs. Whitman had said, and Ingram was temporarily convinced that his American friend must have misinformed him; a conclusion which offended Mrs. Whitman.

Ingram writes later that Mrs. Houghton (M. L. S.), is going to help all that is in her power, by going over Griswold's "Memoir" and

pointing out the statements which are cruel and false. Of these various women assistants he says: "Between us twain, I speak everything in confidence of all these witnesses, but to each of them separately am careful, each one having some bitter enmity for each other. Of you only do all speak well. . . . Mrs. Nichols asked for Stoddard's 'Memoir.' She is surprised at his trying to throw stones at Poe and expected something better from him."

The writer fears that Mrs. Nichols's recollections will be decidedly imaginative when he receives them, but looks to Mrs. Houghton for genuine aid; she is supplying him with fluent accounts of her association with Poe, whom she aided in time of need, and he wonders why Mrs. Clemm has not in her letters referred to this lady, to whom she appears to have been deeply indebted.

Even Mrs. Houghton is: "Not always so clear as could be wished," but "a regular child of nature, ingenuous, unsophisticated and (like Mrs. Whitman) too trusting for the human world." He later states in response to a query from Mrs. Whitman that the reason why Mrs. Clemm never mentioned Mrs. Houghton was (so he infers) because of the ungrateful way in which Mrs. Clemm had treated this kind friend.

He writes: "Mrs. Houghton did anticipate, apparently, Griswold's malignity and tried to

pay for the suppression of the 'Memoir,' but Griswold had too many reasons for publishing it to accept her price. He said that Mrs. Clemm was 'reconciled' to it. Mrs. C. evidently received a small income from it for life. Don't mention this to Mrs. Nichols, or Mrs. Houghton, both wish well to Mrs. Clemm's memory, especially the former, and we are much indebted to them for 'more light.' Poe dictated the events of his life to Mrs. Houghton (then Mrs. Shew), when he was suffering from the illness through which Mrs. H. befriended him."

On May 18, 1875, Ingram writes: "Formerly, I was anxious to impart all information at once, to help the good cause, but now will be silent save to you, till all is published"; he further describes Mrs. Houghton:

"Mrs. Nichols did not think it strange that you knew nothing of Mrs. Shew—Dr. Shew is dead, and Mrs. Houghton separated from Dr. Houghton, if not legally, really! Mrs. H. is not a very highly educated woman, at once explains that she is not literary, but one can see she has natural talent for some things, and is thoroughly good-hearted, loving but independent, and perhaps somewhat too confiding and eccentric. She might worry one's life out to live with, but apart would inspire affection. I must like her, but that of course does not prevent me carefully weighing all her evidence

. . . her letters are so naive and original, that I am charmed with them."

In June 1875, Ingram touches upon his association with Mrs. Lewis, whom he sees occasionally. She is evidently seeking his friendship because she thinks he is likely to be useful to her, and he acknowledges that it is best not to offend her, as his refusal to accept one of her invitations had called forth a slurring criticism of his "Memoir" of Poe from that lady's pen, although she had previously commended this same work. He says that she has given him a copy of Poe's daguerreotype which she owns, and also Poe's MS. copy of "Politian" containing several unpublished scenes; he concludes that many of Poe's papers which she possesses were probably obtained from Griswold with whom she had been on friendly terms.

These references to Mrs. Lewis recall the fact that Poe wrote complimentary notices of her work at a time when her pecuniary aid was a household necessity.

Mrs. Clemm was in need of money for family expenses, and Mrs. Lewis sought her out and induced her to accept advances of which it was very convenient for her to avail herself; such loans, or gifts, had to be made good by the reluctant poet. Poe at times expressed to his friends his extreme distaste for such humiliating tasks, but he, nevertheless,

discharged them. It has been chronicled that Mrs. Lewis would seat herself in Mrs. Clemm's kitchen and remain there until the return of Poe, who had slipped away in the hope of escaping her. His essay on Mrs. Lewis, in which he so highly extolled several of her productions, is an example of his method of paying a debt of honor contracted by Mrs. Clemm.

An interesting example of Poe's corrections furnished for one of Mrs. Lewis's poems was published a few years since by Ingram, in the Albany *Review* (vol. I, 4, 1907). The poem, entitled "The Prisoner of Perote," is completely transformed by Poe's changes, which were, of course, not credited to him. He attended Mrs. Lewis's receptions in the same spirit of discharging his obligations, and when he left on his last journey South, it was from Mrs. Lewis's house that he set out, because by so doing he could leave Mrs. Clemm in the charge of one whom he regarded as an especial friend, who would insure her comfort. Mrs. Lewis's loyalty to Poe was exhibited soon after his death by her efforts to ingratiate herself with Griswold, who posed for a short time as chief arbitrator of fame in literary circles. While Mrs. Whitman and other of Poe's friends were warmly protesting against Griswold's onslaught, Mrs. Lewis was writing to congratulate the ruthless biographer on his having supplied such true "insight into Poe's

character"; later, she broke altogether with Mrs. Clemm, asserting that she was a "fault-finder" and "ungrateful." When, in after years, Griswold and his criticisms were no longer popular, she again changed her tactics and entered the literary arena as Poe's defender. She composed three sonnets to the poet's memory, the last being addressed "To His Foes." In her later days she doubtless convinced herself that she had really performed many kindnesses done by others, and she persisted in declaring that Poe had asked her to write his life.

Mrs. Lewis's baptismal name was Sarah Anne, a name which she scorned to attach to her literary productions; in consequence she adopted "Estelle" as a pen-name, or "Stella," as she was called by Poe in the lines addressed to her. His acrostic written to "Sarah Anna" upon a certain occasion, did not, it has been stated, meet with the lady's approval, and her insistence upon the name of her choosing was at times a source of expense to the poetess, as is shown by a letter of Griswold's, written to her husband, in which Griswold claims quite a sum for the cost of altering her baptismal name to her poetical one, in a laudatory account of her work.

That Mrs. Lewis had flooded Poe with her correspondence was evident from testimony casually offered by Griswold, who wrote to

James Russell Lowell in 1849, in answer to the latter's inquiry about his own letters: "I remember seeing in the hands of Mrs. Lewis, of Brooklyn, who has a large share of the letters addressed to Poe, some of yours, and these I will endeavor to obtain and send to you."

Mrs. Lewis was generous in furnishing information regarding Poe's arch-enemy, Mrs. Ellet, who, she asserted, "goaded Griswold to death."

In a brief correspondence with Mrs. Houghton, Mrs. Whitman is given a glimpse of the attitude of that lady toward "Stella."

Mrs. Houghton voices her indignation that Mrs. Lewis should be asserting that she rendered that timely aid to the Poe family which was in reality given by herself. She exclaims:

"I do not see how you all could attribute to that Mrs. Lewis that sorrowful time in his life when he needed a congenial friend and generous loving care. If it had been left anonymous I should have kept quiet, but Mr. Ingram's mention of Mrs. Lewis, as doing my work, was more than my sense of justice could endure, and I have spoken out to this noble enthusiastic defender of Mr. Poe, John Ingram. . . . I can't see why Mrs. Clemm should have allowed this, of course I know she is dead and has been for many years, still it cannot be possible she was so far gone in

mind and memory as to have forgotten the long time it took her unfortunate 'Eddie' to even tolerate Mrs. Lewis. I saw very little of Mr. Poe the last year of his life, and Mrs. Lewis may have laid them under obligations just about the time Edgar went to Richmond, which obliged him to write up her works while on this lamentable tour, for Mrs. Clemm made promises for him which humiliated his soul, and to which he made less resistance as he began to break up in brain-power about this time. Of course, the body cannot be sustained upon pride (however true and honorable), and want may explain more than anything else."

In a subsequent letter she says:

"My initials when Mr. Poe knew me were M. L. S., and the Valentine written in 1847 to Mrs. M. L. S., and published by Griswold as a poem of his youth, was written the February following Mr. Poe's wife's death and published in the *Home Journal*, by Mr. Willis, at that time. I was married to Dr. Roland S. Houghton, in November 1850. . . .

"(The Valentine) will tell you in a few eloquent words, Mr. Poe's feeling toward me in his most generous and even grateful manner and expression. It speaks for itself—and cannot be gainsaid. I have sent the original to Mr. Ingram. . . .

"Mr. Griswold had reason to dislike me, and put the Valentine to Mrs. M. L. S., among

the poems 'written in youth.' I went to see this creature Griswold with Mrs. Clemm twice, and tried to bribe him to leave out his memoir, by paying the cost of those published, but his hatred of Mr. Poe was a passion worthy of a demon instead of a man. . . .

"P. S. You will not misunderstand me, I do not wish to injure Mrs. Lewis, but she has allowed Mr. Ingram to make statements untrue.

"Mrs. Clemm never mentioned to me of being at Mrs. Lewis's house, but she might have been sometime, but my honest opinion is, that Mrs. Lewis had no home to offer her. Where is this Mrs. Lewis. Do you know? I am curious because of her audacity. M. L. S. H."

Mrs. Elizabeth Oakes Smith was the next one of Poe's friends with whom the English biographer became acquainted. She was another of "The Literati" whose personal claims upon the friendship of Poe won from him a rather lengthy tribute to her poetic work; an appreciation which, if analyzed, may be said to come under the head of "damning her with faint praise." In this critique Poe writes that Mrs. Smith's "most popular poem, according to Griswold," is "The Acorn," which though inferior to her poem, "The Sinless Child," is preferred by many. He speaks of "The Sinless Child" as having made its first appearance in the *Southern Literary Messenger*,

where it "at once attracted much attention from the novelty of its conception" (a "Sinless Child" being an undoubted novelty in almost any locality).

Poe further remarks that the poem is quite long, including more than two hundred stanzas of some eight lines each; and after reviewing its theme at generous length he concludes: "The execution of 'The Sinless Child' is as we have already said inferior to its conception . . . (its author) enables us to see that she has very narrowly missed one of those happy 'creations' which now and then immortalize the poet. With a good deal more of deliberate thought before putting pen to paper, with a good deal more of the constructive ability, and with more rigorous discipline in the minor merits of style, and what is termed in the school prospectuses, composition, Mrs. Smith would have made 'The Sinless Child' one of the best, if not the very best, of American poems."

After having been immortalized by this commendation, drawn out and painfully extended over a half-dozen pages, Mrs. Oakes Smith undoubtedly felt herself justified in taking her place among the poetic elect of her times. Yet whatever may have been the popularity attained by her poem, "The Acorn," it was evidently not the kind from which the "great oaks spring," except perhaps to physical dimensions. At all events when the old

lady entered the circle of story-tellers who would willingly have aided Ingram, he recognized the fact at once, that discretion was the better part of valor, and that Mrs. Oakes Smith was one to be avoided for the sake of Poe, if not for that of his biographers.

This lady was a most ardent spiritualist who revelled in the supernatural and told her dreams impressively. In 1851, her book entitled "Shadowland" was filled with her beliefs and experiences in the realm of spirits which she claimed was far more real to her than that of earth. In this little book she refers to Poe as one "endowed by nature with the eye of a dreamer, and the intuitions of a believer," but she declares, "a slight overbalance of intellect was enough to destroy the beautiful harmony originally designed." This conclusion differs from that arrived at by most critics, for those that have given the matter any consideration invariably conclude, that it was not "strength of intellect," but "weakness of will" which brought about the tragedy of Poe's existence.

Mrs. Smith's volume closes with the words: "The writer has thus thrown herself into the midst of dreams and phantoms, impalpable shapes and airy nothings. Her material might be greatly extended, but perhaps her devotion to truth will be sufficiently shown by what is written."

It was undoubtedly a recognition of this species of "devotion to truth" which made Ingram, twenty years later, refrain from adding to his collection of facts any specimens from Mrs. Smith's storehouse of "impalpable shapes and airy nothings."

Mrs. Whitman's association with Mrs. Oakes Smith (called by her friends "Eva," in memory of the heroine of her poem, "The Sinless Child") was in early years a very close one, as their mutual interest in spiritualism drew them together. Mrs. Whitman wrote several poems to this friend, who was in her day beautiful and much admired. Mrs. Smith aided her husband in editing several papers; and, in addition to the publication of a number of books, she was the first woman in this country to appear as a public lecturer, and at one time she was pastor of an independent church.

Yet her friendship with Mrs. Whitman cost the latter her most priceless autograph treasure, namely the poem "To Helen," beginning, "I saw thee once, once only." Owing to Mrs. Oakes Smith's glowing accounts of the power of a certain clairvoyant, Mrs. Whitman sent the manuscript of this poem to Doctor Joseph R. Buchanan, then of Cincinnati, who was publishing a medical and physiological journal, and making experiments in character-reading. Doctor Buchanan, who had furnished Mrs. Oakes Smith with an impressive reading after

holding an unsigned manuscript of hers in a blank envelope, was intrusted with Poe's poem, for psychometric experiment, and after it had been in his hands for two or three months a request was made for its return. The doctor replied that it had been mislaid and that as soon as it was found it would be returned accompanied by the looked-for "reading." The poem did not, however, turn up.

Ingram had doubtless concluded that "Eva's" assistance was something to be avoided, when he exclaimed to Mrs. Whitman:

"Mrs. E. O. Smith is no good, and I am in hopes that I shall be free from her in a friendly manner."

In reference to Mrs. Gove-Nichols he says:

"She has just recovered her sight after an operation. She tells me that she is preparing her 'Recollections of Poe' for me, but I fancy she'll give too much space to Mrs. Clemm, whom she was very fond of. I may misjudge her but I cannot help deeming that she belongs to the genus imaginative. I judge from some letters and one short interview, but we'll see.

"Were it not so terrible I should often laugh at my American lady correspondents. Half their time and space is devoted to slandering each other—swearing that Poe cared only for them, and that everybody else who lays claim to his friendship is an impostor! That they

(each one says the same) were only girls when he knew them, and when he died, and so could not vindicate him to the world, etc.!! Entre nous—they all hate Mrs. Lewis—(that makes me think she could not have been so bad), and she returns it with interest. In fact, they all look upon Poe's fame as a convenient peg upon which to hang their own mediocrities where the world may see! For my part I believe Poe only cared for Mrs. Houghton out of the lot of them, and he loved her and clung to her as a friend, and as the friend of his wife, but not in any nearer or dearer way. I'm sure that Mrs. H. is most anxious to impress this upon me, as, apparently, someone who had the right to be jealous of her, was jealous. I do like Mrs. H. so much for herself, and not only for her goodness to Poe."

He forwards to Mrs. Whitman Mrs. Houghton's account of the writing of "The Bells":

"Poe came to her house ill and depressed and said 'I have to write a poem and I don't know what to say.' He sat at the open window and the sound of the church bells, sad and gay, came in, and Mrs. Shew (afterwards Mrs. Houghton) suggested them as a subject, and Poe wrote the first draft of 'The Bells' as has been previously recounted." On the first manuscript, which, Mr. Ingram says, is in his possession, Poe wrote "The Bells by M. L. Shew." Her purchase of his poem "To M. L.

S." Ingram also explains by saying that Mrs. Shew was then about to be married to Doctor Houghton, and, having seen the verses, which were likely to be considered too ardent by the public, in view of her approaching marriage, she, upon hearing from Poe that he was about to sell them for twenty dollars, offered him twenty-five dollars and so secured them from publication at that time.

The last of the feminine circle with whom Ingram comes into touch is "Annie," Mrs. Richmond, of whom he writes November 2, 1876:

"Mrs. Richmond speaks in the highest terms of Poe—she, I fancy, saw nothing but his brightest side. I think she was very glad at the prospect of his marriage with you, but I cannot help deeming the result was the best that could have happened, at least for you."

Ingram asserts that Mrs. Richmond has placed a large number of letters at his disposal, and has told him that the manuscript of "The Bells," which Gill has claimed the ownership of, was only loaned the latter by her.

Toward the end of Ingram's correspondence several points of difference arose in regard to certain dates and events about which Mrs. Whitman had given him information; he was inclined to accept the testimony of Mrs. Clemm,*

* That set forth in her letters.

and others, whose statements conflicted with those of his Providence friend, and this seeming lack of confidence in her accuracy, after his having so long acknowledged its value, grieved Mrs. Whitman exceedingly and caused a partial estrangement.

Mrs. Whitman's sensitiveness to Ingram's questioning of her statements was enhanced by his publication of the "Annie" letters, which exploited the fact that, while Poe was engaged to her, he was writing exceedingly affectionate, if "brotherly," letters to Mrs. Richmond, who undoubtedly appealed to the more practical and human side of his nature. "Annie" was young, warm-hearted and impulsive; she adored Poe's genius, and when he came to visit in her household ministered to his comfort, and acted the part of a loving sister, as he asserted. On these occasions "Annie's" husband, Mr. Richmond, was included in the family group, and seems to have shared his wife's interest in Poe.

While Mrs. Whitman appealed to the ideal and intellectual side of Poe's nature and constantly inspired him to rise to the heights she hoped that he might attain, it is certain that she deplored his weaknesses and exacted from him a line of conduct which he felt he could never maintain. Under these circumstances it is not unnatural that in moments of reaction, when he was debating with himself his

own qualifications, he should have turned to "Annie" for the affectionate encouragement of one who accepted him as he was, and soothed instead of endeavoring to uplift him. After the breaking off of the engagement, Poe turned at once to "Annie" for sympathy, and also as a friend to champion his reputation which he felt had been unjustly assailed.

It can be easily imagined that the publication, for the first time, of the "Annie" letters, of which Mrs. Whitman had known nothing, and which seemed to tell the public that Poe's love for her was less intense than she had supposed, came as a great shock to her, and not only darkened, but shortened her last days.

After her long association with Ingram and her faithful endeavors to aid him in his work (and he owned that she was the only one to whom he was materially indebted), it was a distinct blow to Mrs. Whitman to have published by Ingram the affectionate letters to "Annie," in which Poe referred slightingly to her, and announced his satisfaction at having the engagement broken. In these letters, which reveal the omission of considerable matter by the English editor, he might well have omitted such paragraphs as were bound to wound the feelings of one who had been his faithful assistant. Although in the end, Mrs. Whitman modified her displeasure, and in her appreciа-

tion of Ingram's work,* dedicated to her, forgave his deviation from what she thought the path of friendship, their previous happy relationship was never re-established.

* Ingram's first "Memoir" was dedicated to Mrs. Whitman. The second, containing the "Annie" letters, was issued after her death, but the letters themselves had been previously published by Ingram in a magazine article.

CHAPTER XIII

RIVAL BIOGRAPHERS

THE way of the transgressor may be hard, but that of the assistant of rival biographers is harder still, and in this stony path the daintily shod feet of Mrs. Whitman were destined to travel wearily during the last years of her life.

Yet it is true, "the labor we delight in physics pain," and despite the harassment, incessant controversy, and even the dissatisfaction with final results, Mrs. Whitman undoubtedly experienced the keenest pleasure in sharing in the production of works in which she felt such intense interest.

Although many years had elapsed since Griswold's cruel attack on Poe had stirred the literary circles to controversy and indignation, the memory of his brutality, coupled with the undying charm of Poe's romantic figure (the only truly romantic figure in our literature), left him still in possession of the foremost place in the hearts of would-be biographers.

The wave of interest, which culminated in the "Baltimore Memorial," in 1875, with its impressive exercises and dedication of the "Poe Monument," seems to have started

several years earlier, making itself apparent quite simultaneously on both sides of the water, as has been previously suggested. In France, England, and Germany, as well as in New England and the South, prominent men of letters were busying their pens with essays, criticisms, translations, and finally biographies of Poe.

The first of these to turn to Mrs. Whitman had been Richard Henry Stoddard, to whom she supplied considerable data, loaning him various selections from Poe's letters in the belief that they would help him in the interpretation of the writer. Instead, however, of Stoddard's taking a sympathetic view of Poe's communications, he scoffed at them as insincere productions, using them rather as evidence *against* his subject than in his favor. This naturally grieved Mrs. Whitman exceedingly, and for this reason she was more keen to assist the next applicant for aid, in the belief that a biographer truly in sympathy with Poe would estimate his character more justly.

Therefore, as has been already noted, when William F. Gill, of Boston, applied to her she readily responded to his appeal.

In the autumn of 1873 he wrote to Mrs. Whitman:

"Mr. Clarke's memoir fails in strength of denunciation of Griswold's mendacity. I mean

that my essay shall at least be strong on that point. If I can claim no other kindred trait with the genius of whom I am to write and speak, I can sympathize in the manner and spirit with which he denounces any imputation upon himself, and the hand which points the finger of contempt at Griswold's perfidy will not be gloved."

Gill's claim to resemble Poe in one of his unlovely characteristics is a reminder of Edmund Clarence Stedman's pronouncement upon those of his biographers, who have dwelt more upon the "infirmity" of his genius than on his literary achievements. He remarks that these critics of Poe, although "unable to produce a stanza which he would have acknowledged, at least felt within themselves the possibilities of his errant career."

In his desire to handle Griswold "without gloves," Gill was at times inclined to lose sight of his subject, yet his enthusiasm for Poe made Mrs. Whitman hope that he would eventually produce an adequate biography.

But, from the first, it was quite evident that he was not an accurate or systematic worker; his letters were hasty scrawls, which spoke of slap-dash methods and showed the writer's inclination to be both careless and inconsequent, contrasting most unfavorably with Ingram's beautifully penned epistles and systematic methods of investigation.

Gill, after visiting Mrs. Whitman in Providence, and having been accorded a long interview, shows by subsequent letters that he has practically forgotten the information she has bestowed. He writes, March 14, 1874:

"I am fairly at my work of writing the defense of Poe now. It occurred to me that you might aid me still further, if you would, by writing out a sketch of the personal characteristics of the poet that I might have before me.

"Of course it is not possible to recall all that one hears in a conversation. I feel that I have forgotten many of the little points evolved in my meeting with you. Should you therefore have an opportunity soon of recalling any little characteristics, they would prove very useful, and I should be under new obligations to you."

Having complied with this request, and in addition sent Gill a couple of letters to which he had vouchsafed no answer, his Providence correspondent took it for granted that his interest in this work had subsided, and turned her attention toward the enthusiastic young Englishman.

During the season of 1874, Ingram furnished a magazine article about Poe, in which he used some of the matter supplied him by Mrs. Whitman, and this was not long in reaching the notice of Gill, who at once sat down to

voice his exceeding indignation that she had allowed Ingram to print that which he was about to make use of himself.

To this communication Mrs. Whitman replied expressing her surprise at his attitude in regard to her right to handle her material as she saw fit, and also suggesting that by his careless methods and failure to do his part, he had convinced her that his defense of Poe is not likely to prove as satisfactory as that of Ingram.

Gill responded apologetically, urging that he had been a bit hasty, and that his incessant work on the Poe biography, which he was now engaged upon, must be his excuse for irritability.

From this time, until the publication of Gill's biography, Mrs. Whitman continued to aid him as much as was in her power, giving him, besides literary material, some bits of good advice to which he paid little attention.

In February, 1875, she is aiding him in the correction of proofs and writes:

"I will endeavor to make such corrections as seem to me most urgently called for in the proofs sent me. . . ."

She offers some suggestions as to the functions of the biographer, when she says:

"I think that selection is as necessary in the writing of a Biography, or Memoir, especially the Biography of a poet—as it is in the

modelling of his statue or the painting of his portrait. We want the ideal—the large general effect of the subject, not the petty, ignoble details and external blemishes. We do not want for instance to hear of the wigs and paint of a Queen Elizabeth, or the dilapidated wearing apparel of a poor poet, but to know something of his essential attributes and idiosyncrasies."

Later, she is endeavoring to have certain changes made in passages which she points out as incorrect. She reminds Gill that she has already urged him to make changes which set aright some of Poe's own words: "your present version makes of it a platitude—a thing Poe was incapable of, and the careless rendering is sent abroad to be copied and recopied as his! I cannot reconcile myself to such a wrong. . . .

"You say in your preface that you are indebted to me among others for assistance. This involves me as a participant not only in all you have seen fit to publish on this subject either with or without my consent; as were all the Griswold and Pabodie letters in your 'Lotus Leaf,' paper, but also in all the mistakes and misstatements that you have carelessly associated with the matter claimed to have been confided to you. I must protest against being held responsible for, or made a party to such misrepresentation.

"I am sorry for you since I would gladly

have aided you in your advocacy of a cause which I have so much at heart. For this I was willing to overlook much in the past which I found it easier to forgive than to forget, and for this I am still desirous of your best welfare and success." Mrs. Whitman concludes with a postscript which shows that her indignation is well aroused:

"P. S. Since you say it is too late for you to make the corrections I have suggested, it would certainly be too late to send, as you request, a letter of Mrs. Clemm's in order that a facsimile copy may be taken from it."

She is not at all pleased with the theory which Gill advances about "The Raven," and urges him to omit it:

"I would earnestly suggest that the omission of your theory about the Raven would greatly improve the validity of your narration in other respects. It is a theory which cannot fail to throw discredit upon other portions of the work because it rests apparently upon so slight a foundation. The sentiment of remorse expressed in the poem *may* have had its source somewhere in personal memory, but the treatment of the subject by you is *too literal* and detracts from, rather than heightens the pathos of the situation, at least so it appears to me. I know you will appreciate the candor which impels me to make this criticism if you do not approve the criticism. I should rather leave

everything to the imagination, in that rich chiaro-oscuro which the great artist delighted to work in."

During the next few months the controversy between Ingram and Gill waxes more and more strenuous, and each in turn, after having poured out his wrath to Mrs. Whitman, attacks his rival in the public press.

In January, 1876, Ingram writes Mrs. Whitman that he cannot express his intense disgust at Gill's scandalous charge in the "Memorial Volume." He declares that if such an impudent scamp as Gill lived in the "old world" he would be ejected from the abodes of every decent person, but he tells her that he sees clearly that such "sad rogues" are not only tolerated, but are even feared in the United States. He suggests that even *she* is prone to condone Gill's insults and lies. Ingram fears that his rival is but one of many such scamps, and concludes that he had better wipe his hands of "such a crew."

He goes on to say that a friend has recently written to him about Gill, saying, "even your grandchildren will curse the day your name became connected with that rogue's." This, at the time, seemed to him absurd exaggeration, but he now plainly sees that his other correspondent "knew the man." Ingram can now understand why poor Poe found the United States but "one large prison." For his

own part, he has had enough of it. He has gladly sacrificed literary and pecuniary rewards to try to work out the vindication of a noble and unfortunate man's fame; his health has suffered in consequence, but were it not for Gill he would not have complained. "I would have fought and have won against all the tricks of your Stoddards, Didiers, Fairfields, and the like," he asserts, "but it is quite impossible to sully my name, which is untarnished, by having it connected with this Gill." He tells Mrs. Whitman that Gill is an unmitigated scoundrel and that he sees but one course open to himself, namely, "to give up having anything more to do with Edgar Poe," and if Mrs. Whitman will now tell him of any one whom she knows to be really honest, he will deliver to him his own collection of material and also notes, etc., in regard to Poe.

He closes this indignant letter with the statement that he will always be glad to hear from Mrs. Whitman on any subject, remarking, "but you are the only Northern person connected with literature whose words I can place any reliance on, as a rule."

His use of the words "as a rule," did not please Mrs. Whitman, and she suggested to Ingram that he explain the seeming reflection upon her veracity; this he subsequently did, when in a less excitable mood.

His letter, which contained a copy of the

"Disclaimer," a scathing printed arraignment of Gill, offers an example of the warmth of feeling which was provoked by this biographic rivalry, and will give the reader an inkling of the manner in which Mrs. Whitman was drawn into the arena of strife.

Ingram's "Disclaimer" was promptly responded to by Gill, whose printed rejoinder greatly distressed Mrs. Whitman. She writes on February 27, of her "regret and amazement" at his reply to Ingram, and asserts: "It were better to have abandoned a claim which you must have known to be untenable, and which in your recent interviews with me I thought you frankly admitted to be so." She concludes: "I am sorry that I should have been the innocent cause of so much antagonism and hard feeling between persons whom I fain would have regarded as disinterestedly devoted to a generous purpose."

Gill endeavors to justify his conduct in quoting from certain of her letters without permission, on the ground that he did so in order to strengthen his point against his English antagonist, but Mrs. Whitman's sympathies are with Ingram, and she finds it hard to forgive Gill for his misdemeanors.

In October, 1876, he writes her that he hopes that time will soften her estimate of his shortcomings, declaring: "The provocation seemed to me great, and impulsive people are apt to feel

very differently when swayed by any excess of feeling than in cooler moments when reason is at command."

In response to this letter Mrs. Whitman says: "In relation to what I wrote you about your controversy with Mr. Ingram, and your misuse of my letters, you say that under the influence of provocation impulsive people are sometimes betrayed into doing things which their cooler judgment would condemn. This I am ready to admit—But one must be on one's guard with people who are tempted on provocation to betray the confidence of correspondents. N'est-ce pas?

"Now if you have prepared any paper for publication on Poe in which you are intending to speak of me I must urge it upon you as you value my continuance of friendship to submit the MS to me before publication."

Again she asserts: "I had previously associated you with a cause very dear to me and had entertained for you a feeling of sincere friendliness and regard, notwithstanding your unjustifiable course in publishing letters surrendered to you only that you might, as you said *comprehend* and authoritatively refute one of the calumnies brought against Poe by his 'literary executor.' "

She writes in a subsequent letter: "You must not wonder that I am unwilling to trust these books out of my hands to one so con-

fessedly careless as you are. In witness of your carelessness or forgetfulness, let me remind you that my copy of the third vol. of Redfield is still shorn of the pages containing Mrs. Osgood's recollections of Poe, which I cut out from Griswold's memoir, you having for three years neglected your promise to return them. Again, the extract from one of Mrs. Clemm's letters which you requested for a facsimile, you have not returned. You tell me that you are less careless than you used to be, but your statement about the engraving which you wished to obtain my consent to your publishing does not accord with this."

While Mrs. Whitman was endeavoring to quell the strife being waged between Ingram and Gill, she was approached by one more biographic competitor, namely Eugene L. Didier, of Baltimore, who wrote her early in the year 1876:

"If the most enthusiastic devotion to the memory of our greatest genius can possibly excuse the liberty I take in thus addressing you, please let it suffice.

"I am writing the life of Edgar Allan Poe, to be published by Mr. Widdleton next September in the Household edition of the poems. I want my life to be complete, final and exhaustive. I have obtained much interesting information about Poe's parents, and his school days in Richmond, his life in Baltimore etc.

"If you will furnish me with extracts from his letters, literary or otherwise, and above all put me in the way of giving an authoritative denial to the base and infamous calumny of Griswold regarding the breaking off of your engagement, I shall most gratefully appreciate it."

As usual, Mrs. Whitman did her best to help one more enthusiast to give to the world "the true Edgar Allan Poe," and as a result evoked added resentment from the other biographers. Ingram despised Didier, and Gill was antagonistic to both, and Mrs. Whitman found the path which wound in and out among the queries and conflicting statements and biting criticisms a devious one to follow.

Didier, like the others, plied her with questions and secured what material he could from her already much-scattered store, and finally prevailed upon her to furnish an introduction for his book, which appeared late in 1876.

He wrote her in April of that year:

"I am engaged, heart and soul, upon my Life of Poe. Each day adds something new, and I am thoroughly convinced that I shall be able to offer to the world an accurate memoir. It is not my intention to attempt to refute the malicious statements of previous writers, but simply to prepare a biography which will forever serve as the accepted and genuine life of the Author of the Raven. Mr. Widdleton

has assured me that he will never again publish Griswold's 'Memoir.'

"The only portion of Poe's life that is lost to me is, from the time he left the University of Va., Dec., 1826 to entering West Point, July, 1830. Can you give me any information on this point? . . .

"How grateful would I be if you should prepare something however brief for my memoir. That would indeed show a practical interest in my enterprise. . . .

"Please accept my earnest thanks for the corrected copy of your exquisite poem 'The Portrait of Poe.' When it first appeared, I inserted it in my copy of 'Edgar Poe and His Critics,' which book I esteem the most precious in my library."

Early in June, Didier is writing to her for further assistance, on the score that his manuscript must go to press the following month.

He says: "So do, dear Mrs. Whitman, if you can, in *any* way, assist me in placing before the world the true story of your slandered friend, my earliest admiration, our country's greatest genius—NOW is the accepted time.

"I wish all my lady correspondents were as kind and considerate, and let me add, sensible as you are. Mrs. von Weiss,* having

*Mrs. Susan Archer Talley von Weiss saw something of Poe when he was in Richmond; she published an article about him in *Scribner's Monthly* in March, 1876.

said she would be pleased to give 'all the information' she could 'concerning Mr. Poe,' I wrote to her for certain information which she claimed to be able to furnish. In reply, she writes a long letter, saying: 'Much that I knew of Mr. Poe was under the seal of personal confidence, and may never be revealed at all—but it assisted me to know Mr. Poe as well, I suppose, as such a nature may be known or understood. My acquaintance with him was brief, but there existed between us a very strong sympathy and appreciation such as I can find no words to thoroughly express, but you may, perhaps, understand: and woman though I am, and young as I was at the time—1849—I believe that I comprehended him as fully as any one ever did. He admitted this.'

"Mrs. Weiss then goes on to say that the cause of the quarrel between Allan and Poe was 'very simple and natural under the circumstances,' and while admitting that she feels it a duty to make known circumstances which would extenuate (exonerate) Mr. Poe from the charge of ingratitude etc., towards his adopted father, asserts: 'I am yet unwilling to wound Mrs. Allan's feelings, who is still living.'"

After presenting this example of the way in which this lady had assisted him, Didier closes with the words: "What I want is to remove a cruel wrong from the dead, but I have done

that without Mrs. von Weiss' valuable assistance. . . ."

Didier next voices his contempt for Fairfield, who has created a sensation by his production of an article on Poe entitled, "A Mad Man of Letters," in which he sets his subject forth as a victim of epileptic mania. Didier says: "I am preparing an article in which I intend to make Fairfield, in a literary sense 'The man that was walled up,' I know the fellow personally, and am familiar with his absurd imitations of Poe in his first literary ? productions."

Fairfield's presentation of Poe as one whose genius was something akin to epilepsy, provoked a storm of protest from Poe's admirers; Didier pronounced him "as malicious as he was ignorant," Gill announced that he wished "to horse-whip" the offender, and Mrs. Whitman, invariably mild and gentle, was driven to the production of an article the most severe ever put forth by her.

It was entitled, "Poe, Critic and Hobby," and may prove interesting to a generation that finds it hard to realize how keen was the Poe controversy some forty years ago.

Oct. 13, 1875.

To the Editor of the Tribune,

Sir:

Mr. F. G. Fairfield, a gentleman who has the temerity to pass "ten years among spir-

itual mediums" in the cause of science, having demonstrated that they are all more or less afflicted with epileptic mania, has recently turned his attention to poets and men of inspirational genius, and finds that they too, from Ezekiel to Æschylus, from Æschylus to Coleridge are all mad as March hares. If there is method in their madness, there is also madness in their method. He frankly confesses in his book of mediums that he has himself had personal experience of the malady. He has studied it in all its phases. He intimates that "habitual lying" is one of its most trustworthy exponents. . . .

In the October number of *Scribner's Monthly* this gentleman has an article entitled, "A Mad Man of Letters," in which he selects the author of "The Raven" as a favorable specimen of the epileptic type. Assuming chronic lying as symptomatic of the disease, he gravely quotes the following story in evidence of Poe's habitual mendacity. A single instance, he says, may suffice to prove the many. Here is the instance:

"A gentleman who professed to have received 'the facts' from Mrs. Clemm, told him that Poe, once on a time, after walking all the way from New York to Fordham, swallowed a cup of tea, sat down to his writing-desk, and dashed off 'The Raven' substantially as it is now printed and submitted it to Mrs. Clemm

as the result of his evening's incubation, unmindful of the fact that Poe did not reside in Fordham until long after 'The Raven' was printed and published. Mr. Fairfield naïvely accepts this story as a choice bit of veritable history, illustrative of Poe's tendency to habitual lying. For how could 'The Raven' have been composed at a single sitting, when Mr. Fairfield assures us that he has the evidence of Poe's contemporaries on this matter, gentlemen who were in the habit of meeting him at midday for a cozy chat in Sandy Welch's cellar. And did not these gentlemen assure him that the poem was produced line by line, stanza by stanza, and submitted by Poe, piecemeal to the criticism and emendation of the Ann-St. Clique? Gentlemen who doubtless 'Knew a hawk from a hand-saw when the wind was southerly,' and who suggested many valuable alterations and substitutions. One of these gentlemen, says Mr. Fairfield, 'has even pointed out two particular instances of phrases that were incorporated at his own suggestion,' showing that 'The Raven' was a kind of joint-stock operation in which many minds held small shares of intellectual property.' After this, may we not hope that the gentlemen who assisted at the incubation of this marvellous fowl in Sandy Welsh's cellar, will come forward in a body to claim their respective shares in this piece of joint-stock property, thus setting

at rest forever all questions as to who wrote 'The Raven' . . ."

Having disposed of "The Raven," Mr. Fairfield applies his scalpel to Poe's wonderful poem of "Ulalume," calling it, in his haphazard way, "his last poem, a mere rigmarole in rhyme, exhibiting in its elaborate emptiness the last stages of mental decrepitude and decay." "Thus sang he, then died," exclaims this careful and conscientious commentator.

On the contrary "thus sang he" then wrote, "Eureka," "The Bells," "Annabel Lee," and other of his most memorable poems. But when an "alienist," I believe that is the correct word, mounts his hobby and rides roughshod in pursuit of an epileptic subject to illustrate a favorite theory, he cannot be expected to pay much attention to such hard facts as happen to lie in his way. . . .

If Mr. Fairfield, who is not without poetic insight, had thought less of his theory and more of his subject, he might have better apprehended what he is pleased to call the *gist* of the poem; might have seen that it was not the "low hanging moon," but "Astarte"—the crescent star of hope and love, that after a night of horror was seen in the constellation Leo, "coming up through the lair of the lion, as the star-dials hinted of morn." He might have seen the forlorn heart hailing it as a harbinger of happiness yet to be, hoping

against hope, until, when the planet was seen to be rising over the tomb of a lost love, hope itself was rejected as a cruel mockery, and the dark angel conquered . . . it is a poem for poets, and will not readily give up "the heart of its mystery" to alien "alienists."

Mrs. Whitman reviews Mr. Fairfield's unflattering charges, closing with the quotation of his accusation that Poe was "incapable of honest work," in response to which she says: "If this piece of amateur surgery is a specimen of 'honest work' we must needs borrow *Aesop's* lantern to find out its honesty."

About this time, Didier voices his opinion of the value of Gill's work.

He writes to Mrs. Whitman:

"The publication of the book has been delayed on account of some negotiation with that man Gill, who, it appears, has got together a lot of rubbish which he wants to publish. He applied to me to incorporate it with my life. I declined positively. Mr. Widdleton seems to fear him, and is now trying to buy his stuff, not for publication, but 'merely to get it out of the way.' . . .

"I thank you most cordially for your letter and valuable enclosures. Our poet has one rare good fortune at least: so true, so gifted, so generous a friend as yourself to watch with tender devotion over his honor."

Early in January, 1877, Ingram, who despite his threat has not after all relinquished his biographical undertaking, writes that he is awaiting the opportunity to see Gill's book, from which he anticipates small profit, and also that of Didier, of whom he has a very poor opinion. He hopes to produce something quite different from "all these sketches," he means to paint "a living, breathing man."

Ere long, his wish to see the rival biographies is gratified, and he proceeds to express his opinion of these American works.

Of Didier's book he says that Mrs. Whitman's introductory letter is the best part of it, exclaiming:

"Didier seems to have vulgarized all he touches. I prefer Griswold's ghastly, gaunt, and even fiendish portraiture, to Didier's man-milliner sort of puppet. As for his data, as, of course, you have detected, they are more mischievous and misleading than those of any work on Poe yet published. Scarcely a page but is full of errors—he has copied my vindication extensively, as you see, but even there, he has either copied me when I have been in error, or has made a 'muddle' of my facts. As I have told you, Mrs. Poe died before the fire,—Stoddard was quite right there,—and that alone would have invalidated the statements of old Mr. Clarke. . . . From birth to death the book is unreliable, untrue, and

some statements are, evidently, purposely mistold."

A few months later Ingram's opinion of Gill's book is embodied in a scathing review in the *London Athenæum*, October 27, 1877; from this a few extracts may be worth quoting, to illustrate the kind of welcome which greeted Gill's work in London:

"This 'Life of Poe' is written, its author informs us, to correct Griswold's 'numerous inconsistencies' and 'glaring falsehoods'; but after perusal of the book, we are forced to the conclusion that the compiler cannot have read his predecessor's work through, or he would not make the many erroneous statements about it that he does. Some of his misstatements, indeed, are so singular, that it seems strange that they can have been made unintentionally; whilst his blunders, whenever he attempts to give information derived from 'original investigation' are most ludicrous."

This criticism continues, in the same pleasing vein, to demolish Gill's production:

"Another *raison d'être* of this book is, says Mr. Gill, the complaint of an English author that 'no trustworthy biography of Poe has yet appeared in his own country.' If Mr. Gill intended to remove the reproach, he has failed utterly. Unwilling, or unable, to thoroughly investigate personally the subject of his work, he has contented himself with taking Mr.

Ingram's recent 'Memoir' of Poe as the basis and main source of his compilation, added several pages from Mrs. Whitman's book, a few untrustworthy data from an old sketch by Mr. Stoddard, interlarded some irretrievably vulgar anecdotes, and concluding with a republication of the threadbare 'Memorial Ceremonies' of 1875, entitles the collection 'the first complete life of Edgar Poe yet published.'

"Could he have seen our recent review of Mr. Didier's volume, he would, doubtless, have deferred publication of his book until he had corrected some of the many preposterous errors with which it abounds. His most glaring fault is his want of knowledge of the subject he is writing upon; in reprinting quotations from the writers, whose works he makes so free with, he almost invariably betrays the fact that, instead of referring to the original source, he is citing at second-hand. He continually indulges in long *verbatim* or slightly altered excerpts from his predecessors, without affording the least acknowledgment of his indebtedness; and whenever he does confessedly quote, he nearly always fathers the quotation upon the wrong person. . . . Mr. Ingram's 'Memoir' is followed with blind reverence, although, of course, without acknowledgment, and the consequences are often quite laughable. . . . Mr. Gill's errata and blunders would

require several pages of the *Athenæum* to set forth." The article closes with a list of some of these errors.

This critique was reprinted in the Boston *Herald* on October 28, and to this onslaught Mr. Gill replied in the same paper on November 11, not softening his epithets or mincing his words.

He began by noting the fact that Mr. Ingram was an attaché of the London *Athenæum*, which must explain its present attitude, asserting: "This Mr. Ingram, like Mark Meddle in London *Assurance*, courts notoriety, and, having failed to enlist any attention in his memoir of Poe, has, since its publication, groped among the outskirts of the literary circles, with his shoulders laden to his ears with chips, craving, like Meddle, a blow or a kick. Nearly two years ago (Feb. 1876) he got what he had for some time desired in this way, in a letter published by me in the London *Athenæum*, and copied here in the New York *Evening Post* and other journals. . . ."

Mr. Gill then goes on to protest against the duplicity of Ingram in securing from Mrs. Whitman the use of letters previously placed in his hands, and prints extracts from two of Mrs. Whitman's letters asking for the return of matter which she wished to show to the Englishman. He resents the fact that Ingram has taken steps to put his "Memoir" before the

American public, after having given him to understand that his work would never conflict with his own. He acknowledges that there are some errors in his work, but declares that they are not those suggested by the *Athenæum;* such as they are, he announces, will shortly be corrected in his new edition about to appear. He says: "Mr. Ingram, probably aware that my 'Life' is to be republished in England, and sensible of the effect that its disclosure of the unreliability of his memoir will produce, took the only available means of modifying this unpleasant effect by animadverting upon the trustworthiness of my biography in the columns of the journal to which he is attached. . . . In conclusion permit me to state that Mr. Ingram's memoir, which the *Athenæum* accuses me of 'blindly following' is comprised in 99 12 mo. pages, while my 'Life' also a 12mo. contains 315 pages."

"Dr. Johnson has said that he never knew that he had succeeded 'until he felt the rebound.' According to this test Mr. Ingram has paid my 'Life' a compliment by his virulent attack which should compensate for the bad temper brought to it."

This retort from Gill called forth another regretful protest from Mrs. Whitman, who keenly felt the unnecessary publicity given to her private correspondence. In addition to her own failing health, the recent death of her

sister was a source of great sorrow to her, and the bitter controversies indulged in by the literary men with whom she had hoped to work out such admirable tributes to Poe's memory told heavily upon her slender reserve of strength.

By this time she had discovered that, however different the opinions of Poe's biographers might be in regard to their subject, they were of one mind in their supreme disdain for one another.

Having recorded Ingram's opinion of Gill and Didier, and Gill's opinion of his English rival, it may be interesting to learn something more of Didier's views concerning the other two.

Of Ingram, Didier writes: "Every schoolboy knows who discovered America, but many intelligent men and women do not know who 'discovered' Edgar A. Poe. Some years ago an obscure Englishman claimed to have discovered Poe and made him known to the American people. Not only did this obscure Englishman claim to have introduced Poe to American readers, but he attempted to belittle and read out of court all Americans who presumed to write about their own countryman. But while attempting to undervalue their work, he did not hesitate to appropriate,—I like a gentle word,—their material. I was a student of Poe's life and works before this presumptuous Englishman had emerged from

his original obscurity. . . . I confess I have been astonished at what I have heard regarding the peculiar methods this 'Discoverer' has used in adding to his Poeana." Didier then charges Ingram with having failed to return to their owners some of the poems and original MSS. which they allowed him to have in his possession while his work was being produced.

Having freely expressed himself regarding Ingram, Didier voices his admiration for Gill's production: "We regret that we cannot truthfully praise Mr. Gill's literary style. . . . Mr. Gill's grammar is not always as Cæsar's wife was required to be, above suspicion. . . . Mr. Gill devotes the greater part of his appendix to an account of the proceeding attending the unveiling of the Poe Monument in Baltimore in November, 1875. We must condemn his bad taste in quoting from the contemporary account of the ceremonial such passages as these: 'Mr. William F. Gill, who has done much by his written vindication of the poet's memory to remove false impressions, gave the finest rendition of "The Raven" to which we have ever listened. The large audience was spellbound by his perfect elocution, and his resemblance to the recognized ideals of Mr. Poe himself made the personation of his horror and despair almost painful.'" To this Didier adds: "We were present on this occasion, but we saw no person 'spellbound.' We have seen

every likeness of Poe extant, but we fail to discover any resemblance between the author of 'The Raven' and Mr. Gill. Gill set out with fixed determination to whiten Poe and blacken Griswold. Like the famous La Mancha, he attacked all obstructions which stood in the way, and the result has been that those who knew Poe will scarcely recognize him as painted by Mr. Gill."

In her alliance with the biographers whose work she believed would exonerate Poe from the injustice which had been done him, Mrs. Whitman had doubtless pictured herself as happily associated with a set of idealists, who, like herself, cherished one precious aim. Experience taught her that even the best-intentioned literary craftsmen are subject to human frailties, and may be governed by personal interest, swayed by small animosities, and influenced by commercial considerations.

Yet she has left behind her no record of having ever regretted the expenditure of time and strength which she bestowed upon a cause so dear to her.

CHAPTER XIV

STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ

IT has been said that a most fitting escutcheon for Poe might have been the crest of Scott's templar, Bois-Guilbert, a raven in full flight, holding in its claws a skull, and bearing the motto—"Gare le Corbeau."

However suitable this crest might be pronounced for the author of "The Raven," one would have questioned its appropriateness for the gentle Rhode Island poetess, whose response to the famous poem had first brought her into touch with its author. Yet it was "a raven in full flight" that Mallarmé chose to send to this lady in the form of a strikingly effective book-plate, which she afterward cherished among her literary treasures.

It is true that this raven, executed by Manet's brush, held no skull in its claws, but instead bore a complimentary inscription from Mallarmé, who had some time before opened a correspondence with Mrs. Whitman.

The association with Mallarmé formed one of the most interesting links in the chain of events which connected Mrs. Whitman with Poe. The Frenchman, who was born in 1842,

was, like Ingram, some forty years the junior of his friend in Providence, at the time of his correspondence with her and his translation of Poe's poetic works.

Ingram had written Mrs. Whitman, early in 1876, regarding the translation of Poe's poems, on which the Frenchman was then at work and had described the illustrated edition of "Le Corbeau" which had been previously published. He had suggested that Mallarmé was anxious to make her acquaintance, and was about to write to her. Ere long the Frenchman's first letter arrived, and some time after the opening of this correspondence Mrs. Whitman wrote Ingram:

"I had on the 28th. inst. an exquisitely beautiful letter from Mallarmé, who is in truth a 'prose poet' in his letters. He says beautiful things about you. He has now made the acquaintance of three of my friends. Our Rose (Peckham), Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton and Walter F. Brown, one of our young Providentials; so that we are getting well acquainted. He is to send his 'Raven' by Mrs. Moulton who is returning in February."

As has been pointed out, "The Raven's" popularity was not confined to this side of the water; its weird fascination was exercised in many foreign lands, where curious translations and parodies were constantly appearing, and already Ingram was planning a compila-

DRAWING FOR "THE RAVEN"

Probably drawn by Manet. Sent to Mrs. Whitman by Stéphane Mallarmé

tion of "Raven" literature, a project which he later carried out; the little volume on "The Raven" and its poetic progeny proving a most amusing literary curiosity.

This poem, for which Poe received ten dollars, may be viewed as a unique example of increased valuation, for forty years after its publication, the owner of the original manuscript rated his literary property (said to be the most popular lyric in the world) at ten thousand dollars.

Mallarmé's interest in Poe had led him to make a literal, unrhymed translation of "The Raven," which had been most strikingly illustrated by Edouard Manet, the great painter of the Impressionist School. And although the structure of the poem makes its rendition into French exceedingly difficult, yet Mallarmé's translation promptly became a favorite with his countrymen.

When he was in his early twenties, Mallarmé spent considerable time in England, becoming so proficient in the language of that country that on his return to France he was prepared to accept the chair of English at the Lycée Fontanes, in Paris, which he continued to occupy for many years.

Despite his proficiency in English, his correspondence with Mrs. Whitman was carried on entirely in French.

Mallarmé's first letter follows:

87 Rue de Rome,
PARIS, April 4, 1876.

MADAME:

I do not know if this letter will precede or follow by a few days the arrival in Rhode Island of a copy of "Le Corbeau," that my collaborateur, Manet, and myself have felt it not less a duty than a pleasure to offer you.

Whatever is done to honor the memory of a genius the most truly divine the world has seen, ought it not at first to obtain your sanction?

Such of Poe's works as our great Baudelaire has left untranslated, that is to say, the poems and many of the critical fragments, I hope to make known to France, and my first attempt of which you will receive a specimen, is intended to attract attention to a future work, now nearly completed.

I trust that the attempt will meet your approval, but no possible success of my design in the future could cause you, madame, a satisfaction equal to the joy, vivid and profound and absolute, one of the best that my literary life has yet procured for me—caused by a fragment kindly sent me by M. Ingram from one of your letters in which you express a wish to see a copy of our "Corbeau."

Not only in space, which is nothing, but in time, made up for each of us of the hours we deem most worthy of remembrance, your wish

seemed to come to me from so far! and to bring with it the most delicious return of long cherished memories ever experienced by me, for, fascinated with the works of Poe from my infancy, it is already a very long time since your name became associated with his in my earliest and most intimate sympathies.

Receive madame this expression of my gratitude such as your poetique soul may comprehend, for it is my inmost heart which thanks you,

STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ.

About this time Mallarmé became interested in the Poe memorial volume, which was being compiled in Baltimore, and declared his intention of contributing to it. He also expressed his desire to dedicate his translation of Poe's poems to Mrs. Whitman. He wrote:

"I shall contribute to the memorial volume that your compatriots are about to publish, two sonnets by one of my confreres and myself, as also some admirable pages of Baudelaire, and finally a portrait of Poe copied by Manet from one which Ingram has just published. I propose, either this winter or in the spring, or later, to publish a complete translation of the poems. Pardon these details they are associated with a request I have to make of you. It is that you will permit me to dedicate this translation to you.

"Do not refuse me that which I regard as a duty now that I know you and that it has become possible to me. Above all when I tell you that it was one of my earliest aspirations and that I would even then have ventured to do it without having the happiness of knowing you."

A month later he writes expressing his gratitude for the interpretation of the poem "Ulalume," which she has sent him with its history as she had gleaned it from her conversations with Poe.

"My first thought has been that I should have to-day translated for the first time the lines 'To Helen.' It seemed to me that I should do better in knowing the subject, ah! let me take your hand.

"Perhaps since the evil is done, and my translation of this divine poem dates from the epoch when I translated the others, I may inquire if you have already seen the publication that I have made of it in one of our Reviews? The *dedication* and the *preface* will come afterward."

Mallarmé's first letter not only "preceded" the arrival of the "Corbeau," but did so by several months; the illustrated poem was not consigned to Mrs. Moulton's care as had been suggested, but was forwarded by mail, and by some accident it disappeared during its transatlantic flight. In November, Mrs. Whitman writes concerning the coming of a second

copy of the ill-fated book (which was really in the form of a portfolio, with its illustrations in large separate sheets, a gift which could not have been easily overlooked in a package of mail).

"How can I thank you for your beautiful letter and for your generous intention of sending me another 'Corbeau.' I am so sorry that our 'ebony bird' should have caused you so much trouble; for aught we know it may be still wandering to and fro over the waste of waters like the raven which Noah sent forth from the window of his ark and which seems to have returned 'nevermore.'

"Yet I cannot altogether regret the loss of this ominous bird since you say it caused your thoughts more frequently to wing their way across the ocean toward the haven to which it was destined. Nor need I tell you how gratefully I shall receive from you the dedication of your proposed volume of the translated poems. Mr. Ingram has promised to send me a copy of the *République des Lettres*, containing your translation of the one 'To Helen.' Have you not made a translation of 'Ulalume'?"

It may be of interest to quote a brief extract from the translation of "To Helen," the poem beginning, "I saw thee once, once only," etc.

Je te vis une fois—une seule fois—il-y-a-des années: combien, je ne le dois pas dire, mais

peu. C'était un minuit de Juillet; et hors du plein orbe d'une lune qui, comme ton âme même s'élevant, se frayait un chemin précipité au haut du ciel, tombait de soie et argenté un voile de lumière, avec quiétude et chaud accablement et sommeil, sur les figures levées de mille roses qui croissaient dans un jardin enchanté, où nul vent n'osait bouger, si ce n'est sur la pointe des pieds;—il tombait sur les figures levées de ces roses qui renderaient, en retour de la lumière d'amour, leurs odorantes âmes en une mort extatique;—il tombait sur les figures souriaient et mouraient en ce parterre enchanté—par toi et par la poésie de ta présence. Tout de blanc habillée, sur un banc de violette, je te vis à demi-gisante, tandis que la lune, tombait sur les figures levées de ces roses, et sur ta tienne même, levée, hélas! dans le chagrin.

Mrs. Whitman's reference to *La République des Lettres*, which contained the Frenchman's translation of Poe's (second) poem "To Helen," recalls the fact that this publication was the organ of the new school of which Mallarmé was one of the principal exponents. This was called the school of the Impressionists and had reacted against the Romantic school, which had for many years dominated the world of letters in France. Mallarmé realized that the field of French poetry had become so conventionalized that all life and originality were

dying out of it and he desired "to refresh the languid current of French style."

This he succeeded in doing, and even his pupils, who pushed his theories too far, did much to give spontaneity and beauty to a national poetry that was becoming flat and tame.

La République des Lettres, which Mallarmé established, was later placed under the direction of Catulle Mendès, the dramatist. This Review touched lightly upon politics and the arts, and published tales, poems, and plays of those interested in this new movement. Ivan Turgeneff was one of its leaders, and some of his finest work appeared in this organ. Alphonse Daudet, Zola, Léon Cladel, and Edmond and Jules de Goncourt were among other contributors.

As a translator Mallarmé holds a pre-eminent place, and his rendering of Poe's poems into French is considered a masterly accomplishment. Edmund Gosse says of it: "Each verse is in simple prose, but so full, so reserved, so suavely mellifluous, that the metre and the rhymes continue to sing in an English ear."

Yet this same critic owns that while Mallarmé ever delights him, he cannot always understand his work, and in reference to his sonnet on the "Tomb of Poe," he declares: "I have read it over and over. I am very stupid but I cannot tell what it says."

One needs only to study this poem in the original, to realize that Mrs. Whitman's task as translator was no easy one, although the critics have pronounced this sonnet one of Mallarmé's most perfect productions:

Tel qu'en Lui-même enfin l'éternité le change,
Le Poëte suscite avec un glaive nu
Son siècle épouvanté de n'avoir pas connu
Que la Mort triomphait dans cette voix étrange:

Eux comme un vil sursaut d'hydra oyant jadis l'ange
Donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu,
Proclamèrent très-haut le sortilège bu
Dans le flot sans honneur de quelque noir mélange.

Du sol et de la nue hostiles ô grief!
Si notre idée avec ne sculpte un bas-relief
Dont la tombe de Poe éblouissante s'orne.

Calme bloc ici-bas chu d'un désastre obscur;
Que ce granit du moins montre à jamais sa borne
Aux noirs vols du Blasphême épars dans le futur.

When Mrs. Whitman undertook the translation of this sonnet, Mallarmé, with a gallant desire to aid her, forwarded his own literal rendering of his poem into English, which is a document well worthy of preservation.

Mallarmé's literal translation:

Such as into himself at last Eternity changes him,
The Poet arouses with a naked[1] hymn
His century overawed not to have known
That death extolled itself in this[2] strange voice:

But, in a vile writhing of an hydra, (they) once hearing
the Angel[3]
To give[4] too pure a meaning to the words of the tribe,
They (between themselves) thought (by him) the spell
drunk
In the honourless flood of some dark mixture.[5]

Of the soil and the ether (which are) enemies, O struggle!
If with it my idea does not carve a bas-relief
Of which Poe's dazzling[6] tomb be adorned,
(A) Stern block here fallen from a mysterious disaster,
Let this granite at least show forever their bound
To the old flights of Blasphemy (still) spread in the future.[7]

[1] naked hymn means when the words take in death their absolute value.
[2] this " his own.
[3] the Angel " the above said Poet.
[4] to give " giving.
[5] ——— " in plain prose—charged him with always being drunk.
[6] dazzling " with the idea of such a bas-relief.
[7] Blasphemy " against Poets, such as the charge of Poe being drunk.

Mrs. Whitman's translation follows:

THE TOMB OF EDGAR POE

Even as Eternity his soul reclaimed,
The poet's song ascended in a strain
So pure, the astonished age that had defamed,
Saw death transformed in that divine refrain.*

While writhing coils of hydra-headed wrong,
Listening, and wondering at that heavenly song,

* "Annabel Lee."

Deemed they had drank of some foul mixture brewed
In Circe's maddening cup, with sorcery inbued.

Alas! if from an alien to his clime,
No bas-relief may grace that font sublime,
Stern block, in some obscure disaster hurled
From the rent heart of a primeval world,

Through storied centuries thou shalt proudly stand
In the memorial city of his land,
A silent monitor, austere and gray,
To warn the clamorous brood of harpies from their prey.

Whatever may be the verdict regarding the success of Mrs. Whitman's translation, it is certain that Mallarmé's serious attempt to aid her by his literal rendering of his sonnet with its instructive notes, is as amusing a bit of memorabilia as one often discovers, and a little study of the problem which it presents gives an admirable idea to the uninitiated of the task which often confronts the translator.

The final flight of Mallarmé's Raven took place early in January, 1877, at which time the Frenchman wrote: "The publisher assures me that you will have been in possession of the Raven some days when this reaches you, and although I trust that a letter from you will confirm my hope, a little dubious in this respect (lest the sombre bird should have abandoned himself to some new fantasie of flight and disappearance?) I have so much to thank you for that I will anticipate your answer, perhaps even now on the way to me."

Mallarmé thanks Mrs. Whitman for sending him by Mr. Walter Francis Brown of Providence a copy of "Edgar Poe and His Critics," with which he is exceedingly delighted.

Mrs. Whitman's note of introduction penned to the Frenchman at the time of Mr. Brown's departure, illustrates her graceful manner of writing presentation missives; she says: "Mr. Walter F. Brown, a young artist of our city, will hand you this note. He is on the wing for Paris, that paradisal city where, as one of our humorists says, 'All good Americans hope to go when they die.' Mr. Brown is not dead. On the contrary, he trusts to spend the winter there in preparing himself for immortality.

"I know that he will have great pleasure in making your acquaintance, and that the pleasure will be a reciprocal one."

Early in February, 1877, Mrs. Whitman writes of the arrival of the long-delayed "Raven":

"I have so many things to thank you for!

"Since I wrote you the 'Corbeau' has become my room-mate, my fireside companion—a presence as real to me as any dream while you are dreaming it. Two of the etchings illustrate the walls of my boudoir; one, where he is seen swooping down over the roofs of the towered city toward the open window of the poet, and the other where he sits enthroned in shadows on the bust of Pallas. These are wonderfully unique and impressive. As for the one where

we see of the Raven only what purports to be 'his shadow on the floor,' it is so far out of the range of my appreciation that I hardly know where to class it. Entre nous I should like to do with it what the Greeks did with their honored dead, i e., *cremate* it. Would the new school of artists ever forgive me?"

Manet's illustrations, done, it has been said, in his most "intimidating" style, are startling productions. A glance at some of them reveals strange blotches of black ink apparently without form or meaning, but presently what has seemed merely a splash of ink proves to be a grotesque vision which takes hold on the imagination with a haunting persistency.

Mallarmé's unrhymed translation of "The Raven," to which these pictures formed so startling an accompaniment is considered a remarkable piece of work from which it may be of interest to quote a couple of stanzas:

Une fois, par un minuit lugubre, tandis que je m'appesantissais, faible et fatigué, sur maint curieux et bizarre volume de savoir oublié—tandis que je dodelinais la tête, somnolent presque: soudain se fit un heurt, comme de quelqu'un frappant doucement, frappant à la porte de ma chambre—cela seul et rien de plus.

. . . . . .

Prophète, dis-je, être de malheur! prophète, oui, oiseau ou demon! Que si le Tentateur

t'envoya ou la tempête t'échoua vers ces bords, désolé et encore tout indompté, vers cette déserte terre enchantée—vers ce logis par l'horreur hanté: dis-mois véritablement, je t'implore. "Y a-t-il du baume en Judée?—dis-moi, je t' implore!" Le Corbeau dit: "Jamais plus."

Mrs. Whitman's letter concerning this production closes with the words:

"Your translation is wonderfully true. I am a little in doubt about the translation of the words (stock and store) by the word *bagage*. To the English reader it 'suggests' something perhaps a little too palpable and tangible *n'est ce pas?*

"Your 'Vathek' has also arrived and was to me a delightful surprise. I have read your preface with strange interest. It reopens many questions long unanswered. It is indeed a treasure. I do not know where Poe has spoken of Beckford, but I am sure that he has often either written or spoken of him. His 'Domain of Arnheim,' in which he speaks of Fonthill was apparently suggested by it. On the margin of a magazine containing this story sent me by Poe before its publication in a vol., he wrote: 'this story contains more of myself and of my inherent tastes and habits of thought than anything I have written.' "

Mallarmé's reprint of Beckford's "Vathek," to which he wrote the introduction above referred to, was among his early publications, as

was his poem "L'Apres-Midi d'un Faune," which, though ridiculed at the time of its appearance in the early seventies, and called "a miracle of unintelligibility," has taken its place among the French classics—and to-day the bibliophiles vie with each other to obtain copies of these two publications.

For years Mallarmé, champion of the Impressionists, was scoffed at in France and elsewhere, but he kept on his way with absolute indifference to outside criticism, and gradually a great change came about in public opinion.

Those that visited his salon were convinced that it was the one vital force operating in the literary world of Paris. Renan was lecturing at the Sorbonne, while Mallarmé was rolling cigarettes and talking nonchalantly to visitors at his own fireside. His guests were not deterred by the fact that they must climb up four flights of stairs to reach him, but flocked to his abode. There he appeared arrayed in his working clothes, for his receptions were for men only; he opened the door himself, and ushered his guests into his modest apartment which was generally filled to overflowing with the rising artists and men of letters of the day.

In this sanctum conversation was carried on in the most simple and direct manner, for affectation shrank out of sight before Mallarmé's absolute sincerity.

Talkers who had come to hear themselves speak, suddenly discovered that there was no chance to exploit themselves here: if they started "brilliant" conversation no response came from the others present, and they soon realized that this circle had gathered to listen to Mallarmé alone; it was a place of silence and tranquillity, the only place in Paris, it was said, where long intervals of quiet could prevail without seeming awkwardness. And in these marvellous intervals Mallarmé was like a presiding Quaker at a Quaker meeting; the guests did not talk among themselves nor did they try to make him speak, they merely waited for him to do so; as one by one the subjects near to the thoughts and interests of all arose, the presiding genius discoursed easily and delightfully upon the various topics which he knew how to make both helpful and inspiring to his fellow craftsmen.

In that atmosphere one could indeed take what Mallarmé called "an exquisite vacation from oneself."

Apart from his receptions and from his delight in the drama, and in witnessing beautiful dancing, Mallarmé's especial recreation was found in slipping away to his boat and gliding out over the water. In his enjoyment of this favorite pastime he seems to have resembled the English poet and tanslator Fitzgerald, who loved his boating in the same way, and to

whom a sailing breeze was more tempting than a pot of gold.

In the year 1896, Mallarmé was paid one of the highest honors that his country could bestow; he was named "Poète des Poètes," by acclaim of all the poets in France. It was an election at which almost every Frenchman of letters voted. Then for two years prior to his death he lived in the full blaze of fame, being regarded as the most conspicuous man of letters in France. Pilgrims visited him as they did Victor Hugo, and his Tuesdays, which had meant so much to the younger writers of France, became renowned throughout the literary world.

Mallarmé's influence in the world of letters has been very great; he evolved a new theory of French verse, and many claim that he was the father of *vers libre*, despite the fact that while he stood for a new freedom he took no liberty with long-standing laws.

Yet it is true that his translations of Poe set the pace for the new school from which the exponents of *vers libre* assuredly derive their inspiration.

He believed that "words are precious stones, and should be so set as to flash and radiate from the page." And of his use of words Edmund Gosse has declared: "language was given him to conceal definite thought; to draw the eye away from the object, he aims at il-

lusion, and wraps mystery around his simplest utterance."

He was a dreamer of dreams and a conveyer of impressions instead of information; his words were suggestive rather than descriptive. Mallarmé's family had been devoted to the service of France for many generations, and in the same spirit, he worked always for his cause and never for himself.

He died in 1898, after a life devoted to letters, yet he left only enough poems to make one small volume; a single volume of prose, a few pamphlets, and the prose translation of the poems of Poe. Among these are, however, some masterpieces of verse and prose.

Arthur Symons said of him: "Mallarmé was one of those who love literature too much to write it, except by fragments, in whom the desire for perfection brings its own defeat."

He stood out against the ultra-realistic school, and headed the revolt against Zola, asserting his principle that "to name is to destroy, to suggest is to create."

He was an early defender of Wagner, and fought for Manet, Rodin, and Degas, when all were against them. He introduced Maeterlinck to fame. He was the head of the Symbolists, and it was due to Mallarmé that Whistler's masterpiece, the portrait of his mother, found a home in the Luxembourg.

Mallarmé's portrait was painted by both

Whistler and Manet, two close friends, who had found in him adequate appreciation at a time when the public had not learned to prize their worth.

Two years after Mrs. Whitman's death, the Arnold portrait, by which alone she preferred to be remembered, was reproduced and copies sent to intimate friends by Mrs. Albert Dailey. One of these pictures was forwarded to Mallarmé, who expressed his pleasure and appreciation to Mrs. Dailey on October 28, 1880. He wrote:

MADAM:

I have been touched as well as made happy by your sending the portrait of Mrs. Whitman.

It is a true act of devotion on your part to have thus perpetuated the expressive features which you have so often looked upon, and which I could but imagine.

But I must first of all thank you for having thought of me in the bestowal of the precious token, and of having (just as she whom we mourn condescended to do in her life-time) treated me as a friend of this noble woman; a friend who will now be yours madam if you are willing.

I am pleased to summon from the past, while reflecting upon the beautiful and gifted one recalled by the image which you have

given me, the lines of the poet *To Helen* of a night.

> How daring an ambition! yet how deep—
> How fathomless a capacity for love!

Thank you for all these recollections once more revived by your kindness madam; and believe me,

Your grateful and devoted
STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ.

CHAPTER XV

MRS. WHITMAN'S LAST DAYS

MRS. WHITMAN'S last years were spent in the city of her birth, where she had passed almost her entire life. Returning to Providence as a young widow in 1833, she had left the city, only for brief trips to Boston, New York, or Washington, except for her European tour in 1857.

Time touched her with a gentle finger, and as her contemporaries one by one dropped away, she drew about her a circle of young people to whom she contributed much of friendly criticism and literary inspiration; she was free from all petty judgments, and no belittling gossip ever passed her lips. Retaining her enthusiasm and interest in all that was taking place about her, she was always ready to welcome new thoughts and to foster the bright hopes of a rising generation.

Her keen interest in spiritualistic phenomena, and her firm belief in the nearness of the spiritual world, seemed to surround her with an unworldly air and kept her in a certain poetical atmosphere which belonged to herself alone.

A brief description of Mrs. Whitman's home during her final years has been given by Pro-

fessor William Whitman Bailey, whose associations were with the house on Benevolent Street, and not with that on Benefit Street with which she is usually associated.

"Her sitting-room was at the left of the front door as one entered, and there the lights were always turned down. Bits of drapery hung about, gave a weird and sombre aspect to the apartment. Mrs. Whitman always wore a veil in doors. I think it was in this room that there hung a large portrait of Poe. . . . Her other pictures some of which were given by artist friends of whom she had many, were of varying merit. Whether good or not, she exalted all, placing the artist's intention far above any conceivable execution. Her imagination could transform the veriest cheap chromo into a masterpiece. She had a trick of inverting her lamp shades so that a flood of light would be thrown upon and suffuse some particular painting or print, leaving the rest of the room in darkness. . . .

"She would indeed poke good-humored fun at her best friends, or most treasured beliefs, meaning no harm, and expecting the same treatment of herself. Like Hood, Lamb, Holmes, Thackeray and others she loved a pun, but to have it passible, it must be very good. . . .

"I have never known any one with so lively a fancy. We were always passing literary squibs between us. . . . I met her one spring day on

Benefit Street, she was walking abstractedly as she was wont to do, till I accosted her, then she at once brightened up; I had just returned flower-laden from the woods, in passing I handed her some sprigs of trailing-arbutus. I can see her now as she tripped off with her peculiar springy step. She always appeared when on the street as if wrapped in meditation. Next day she had acknowledged the gift by a graceful poem in the *Journal.*

"She always was youthful in feeling though then seventy years of age. . . . Her youth was a characteristic feature, not assumed, but an ever-present charm, spontaneous and most delightful. One never realized that she was an old lady. . . . She had a rare devotion to youth of either sex. I think their earnestness and hope appealed to her. . . . The life of the artist appealed to her. She certainly loved Bohemians, even if they lived as she did, from hand to mouth. It was certainly wonderful and pitiful to know upon how little she and Miss Power could exist. They kept no cook or maid, and ate like the gods when there was food, not always nectar and ambrosia, and when they felt like it. Her affection for her sister, so long afflicted, was most tender and pathetic, and to me always recalled the relation of Charles and Mary Lamb."

Mrs. Whitman's eye for nature was extraordinarily acute and any one who accompanied

HOME OF THE DAILEY FAMILY, PROVIDENCE, WHERE MRS. WHITMAN DIED

her on her walks was expected to share in her process of minute observation. One of her friends asserted that "not a tint of the sky, the meadow, the river, the wood escaped her; no flower was too small to be seen by her, and all her glances, like those of Thoreau, were discoveries."

As the eccentricities of her sister Anna increased with advancing age, Mrs. Whitman withdrew more and more from general society, adapting her life in every way to suit the other's demands and needs. She had for years felt convinced that Anna would survive her, and had in consequence practised the most rigid economy in order that she might leave the helpless sister provided for.

When, at last, the younger woman, to whose welfare she had dedicated the greater part of her life, passed on, Mrs. Whitman, then seventy-four years of age, was left entirely alone and seemingly in need, not only of care and affection but of the necessities of life. Then it was that Mrs. Albert Dailey, who had for years cherished a warm friendship for her, insisted that she should become a member of her own household. This invitation Mrs. Whitman accepted gladly, making it later clear to these friends that she still possessed a sufficient income to amply defray any financial indebtedness.

On the 27th of June, 1878, less than a year

after the death of her sister, Mrs. Whitman passed peacefully away at the home of these kind friends, where the last months of her life had been surrounded with every comfort. There she had been free to see and entertain her friends, had found a resting-place for her own household treasures, and had been tended faithfully by the daughters of the house, who had bestowed upon her the same affection that would have been vouchsafed a member of their own family.

To the elder daughter, Miss Charlotte Field Dailey, who especially devoted herself to the elderly guest, and who watched over her when she breathed her last, Mrs. Whitman took pleasure in recounting the interesting story of those past years so filled with memories of the distinguished men and women of her time. Gazing at her favorite picture of Poe upon the wall of her room, she frequently recalled the varied associations linked with the poet's tragic career.

During her last months Mrs. Whitman employed her remaining strength in preparing her collected poems for publication, and in going through the mass of correspondence which she had preserved; day after day she busied herself in destroying countless letters which she felt would be of no value in the compilation of the memoir which she believed would soon be forthcoming.

A few months after Mrs. Whitman's death, a revised and enlarged collection of her poems was published, containing an introduction by her literary executor, Doctor William F. Channing. In this volume are included all the poems relating to Edgar Poe, some sixteen in number. Mrs. Whitman's first book of verse appeared in 1853, when it received a warm welcome from both critics and public; it was entitled "Hours of Life, and Other Poems."

After the death of Doctor Channing, Mrs. Whitman's literary remains were consigned to the care of Miss Dailey, who, with her sister Mrs. Henry R. Chace, discharged the task of going through the entire correspondence and noting its contents. Later, these ladies rendered material assistance to Professor Harrison in his work of editing Poe's writings and of preparing his Life.

Except for the publication of "Edgar Poe and His Critics," in 1860, Mrs. Whitman brought out no other book, although throughout her life she was a constant contributor of both prose and verse, to the periodicals of the day, as well as a correspondent for the New York *Tribune* and the Providence *Journal*.

The popular idea that Mrs. Whitman's claim to literary immortality rests solely upon the foundation of her brief engagement to Poe, and her association with his memory, vanishes in the light of the knowledge of her

own attainments and of the genuine title to remembrance which she won for herself.

Mrs. Whitman's Celtic strain of romance and her ever-ready wit were doubtless an inheritance from her father Nicholas Power, who claimed descent from that Nicholas le Poer, whose castle Don Isle was one of the first to fall under Cromwell's hand. (And in memory of this romantic episode the pet name "Don Isle" was bestowed on Mrs. Whitman by Mrs. Dailey.) From her mother, whose strong and steadfast character is stamped upon the pictures that remain of her, she probably inherited her independent mental attitude, liberal religious outlook and also that well-balanced mind which held in check the purely romantic and sentimental in her nature which must else have predominated too strongly.

Mrs. Whitman early developed an aptitude for literature and language, and her attainments soon far surpassed those of the average young women of her day. Her fondness for the classics is evident to all who scrutinize her works both of prose and verse. To her knowledge of French and Italian she added a perfect facility in reading German and Spanish, an equipment which prepared her to exercise her critical faculty in estimating the productions of foreign writers.

She acknowledged that Dante had been a very strong influence in her literary life, as

his presentment of the allegory of humanity amid the mystic scenes of the supernatural had powerfully affected her imagination. And she especially reflects this influence in her long poem entitled "Hours of Life." This and many of her sonnets, which she looked upon as her more important contributions to the field of poetry, are to-day little known, while some of her fugitive poems, in which she has revealed her love of nature with much grace and charm, will continue to hold their place among this nation's best work. It is hard to find anything lovelier than "A Still Day in Autumn," which was set to music by Henry Wilson, and, under the title of "Autumn," became one of the favorite songs of its day. From this poem three stanzas are quoted:

I love to wander through the woodlands hoary,
In the soft gloom of an autumnal day,
When summer gathers up her robes of glory,
And like a dream of beauty, glides away.

How through each loved familiar path she lingers,
Serenely smiling through the golden mist,
Tinting the wild grapes with her dewy fingers,
Till the cool emerald turns to amethyst;

Kindling the faint stars of the hazel, shining
To light the gloom of Autumn's mouldering halls;
With hoary plumes the clematis entwining,
Where, o'er the rock, her withered garland falls.

That even in the last months of failing health Mrs. Whitman's intellectual powers knew no abatement is evinced in her last poem "In Memoriam," written in memory of her sister in April, 1878, only two months before her own death.

During these last months, which were also the first months of freedom which she had in years experienced, she looked out with all her natural enthusiasm upon the awakening spring, and sighed to think that now that she was at liberty to enjoy the outside world, the arch-enemy pain forbade her doing so. "It is a pity that I cannot enjoy it, now that I am free," she was heard to murmur with a faint smile. She loved life, but she was ready for death, which she had long faced, and now awaited with cheerful composure; it was to her no plunge into the dark, only a slipping out into the light, and in her poem "The Angel of Death," written long years before, she had expressed her welcome to this messenger:

> Henceforth, the sorrowing heart its pulse shall still
> To solemn cadences of sweet repose,
> Content life's mystic passion to fulfill
> In the great calm that from thy promise flows.
>
> Welcome as the white feet of those who bring
> Glad tidings of great joy into the world,
> Shall fall the shadow of thy silver wing
> Over the weary couch of woe unfurled.

A heavenly halo kindles round thy brow;
Beyond, the palms of Eden softly wave,
Bright messengers athwart the empyrean go,
And love, to love, makes answer o'er the grave.

This poem in its complete form was read at the close of the simple funeral ceremonies which were held at the Dailey home, on the last day of June, 1878. Mrs. Whitman was laid in the North Burial Ground, in Providence, where, in spite of her request that no stone should be placed above her grave, and that only the green turf should mark the spot, her literary executor erected a "suitable tablet" to her memory.

Mrs. Whitman's little volume "Edgar Poe and His Critics" won for its author the highest praise from the critics on both sides of the water, and all acknowledged that no more searching analysis of Poe's spiritual and intellectual equipment had been advanced than that furnished by this author when she says:

"Wanting in that supreme central force or faculty of the mind whose function is a God-conscious and God-adoring faith, Edgar Poe sought earnestly and conscientiously for such solutions of the great problems of thought as were alone attainable to an intellect hurled from its balance by the abnormal preponderance of the analytical and imaginative faculties. It was to this very disproportion that we are indebted for some of those marvellous intellec-

tual creations, which, as we shall hope to prove, had an important significance, and an especial adaptation to the time."

And at the end of her monograph she concludes with the words:

"Could we believe that any plea we may have urged in extenuation of Edgar Poe's infirmities and errors would make the fatal path he trod less abhorrent to others, such would never have been proffered. No human sympathy, no human charity, could avert the penalties of that erring life. One clear glance into its mournful corridors, its 'halls of tragedy and chambers of retribution,' would appall the boldest heart.

"Theodore Parker has nobly said that 'every man of genius has to hew out for himself, from the hard marbles of life, the white statue of tranquillity.' Those who have best succeeded in this sublime work will best know how to look with pity and reverent awe upon the melancholy *torso* which alone remains to us of Edgar Poe's misguided efforts to achieve that august statue of peace."

Mrs. Whitman's literary vision was a remarkably clear one; she could see truly, and could also discern the best; that for which she was always searching. And it was said of her that in her presence "one felt that noble and beautiful things were possible."

Her admirable prose portrait of Edgar Poe

may well be supplemented by her last vision of the poet, embodied in her poem "The Portrait."

After long years I raised the folds concealing
That face, magnetic as the morning's beam:
While slumbering memory thrilled at its revealing,
Like Memnon waking from his marble dream.

Again I saw the brow's translucent pallor,
The dark hair floating o'er it like a plume;
The sweet imperious mouth, whose haughty valor
Defied all portents of impending doom.

Eyes planet calm, with something in their vision
That seemed not of earth's mortal mixture born;
Strange mythic faiths and fantasies Elysian,
And far, sweet dreams of "fairy lands forlorn."

Unfathomable eyes that held the sorrow
Of vanished ages in their shadowy deeps,
Lit by the prescience of a heavenly morrow
Which in high hearts the immortal spirit keeps.

Oft has that pale, poetic presence haunted
My lonely musings at the twilight hour,
Transforming the dull earth-life it enchanted,
With marvel and with mystery and with power.

Oft have I heard the sullen sea-wind moaning
Its dirge-like requiems on the lonely shore,
Or listening to the autumn woods intoning
The wild, sweet legend of the lost Lenore;

Oft in some ashen evening in October,
Have stood entranced beside a mouldering tomb
Hard by that visionary Lake of Auber,
Where sleeps the shrouded form of Ulalume.

Oft in chill, star-lit nights have heard the chiming
Of far-off mellow bells on the keen air,
And felt their molten-golden music timing
To the heart's pulses, answering unaware.

Sweet, mournful eyes, long closed upon earth's sorrow
Sleep restfully after life's fevered dream!
Sleep, wayward heart! till on some cool, bright morrow,
Thy soul, refreshed, shall bathe in morning's beam.

Though cloud and sorrow rest upon thy story,
And rude hands lift the drapery of thy pall,
Time, as a birthright, shall restore the glory,
And Heaven rekindle all the stars that fall.

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